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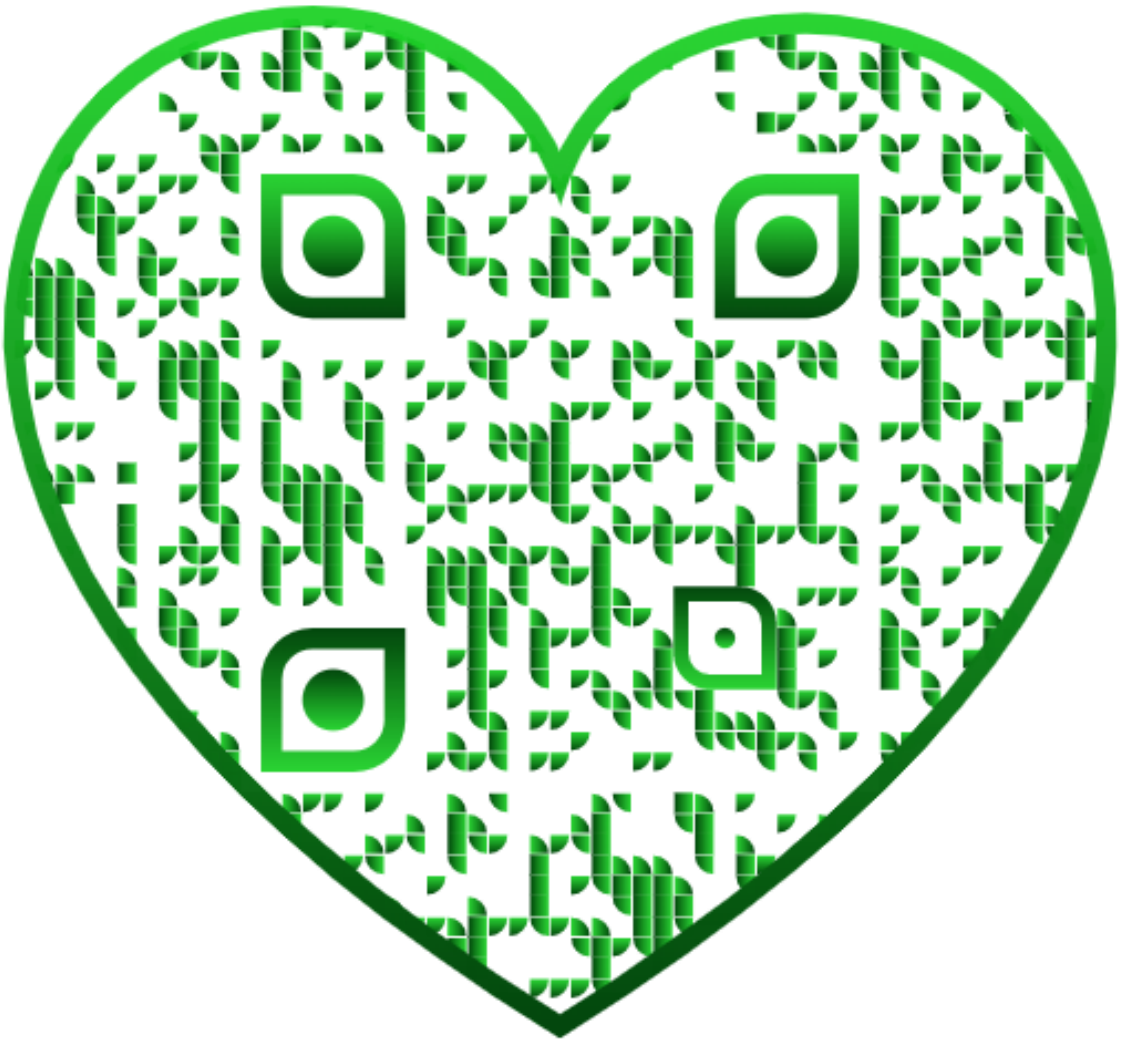

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THE ROOT NOTE

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I must have been 10, maybe 11 and it was a school concert. Those of us fortunate enough to be having guitar lessons were due to play three pieces to the rest of the school accompanied by our long-suffering but inspiring guitar teacher, Mrs Turner. I can still recall clearly the feeling going to school that day and the excitement and anticipation of what was to be my first 'gig'. In what was my first encounter with emojis, Mrs Turner had drawn a smiley face on the sheet music alongside the words, 'Don't rush and enjoy it!' Wise words indeed.

Having finished our performance with only minimal slipups, we enjoyed a round of applause from a gathered audience of contemporaries and teachers. Of course, at such a young age, we all felt a massive sense of achievement and accomplishment. I still enjoy playing live to this day, but you never forget your first time.

I'm sure that many readers of *Acoustic* have, to a greater or lesser extent, played to an audience at some point. It's generally a largely satisfying experience. All the practice, hard work and investment in time come together and, when it goes well, we can't take that silly grin of our faces. For some, the adrenalin rush can be addictive, so much so that as soon as one gig is finished, we start looking forward to the next one.

Whether you play live regularly, occasionally or rarely, can we urge you to get involved in what's being dubbed the 'Acoustic Jam' at this year's London Acoustic Show? If you're not already aware, *Acoustic* columnist, composer and guitarist-extraordinaire Chris Woods has composed a special piece of music designed so that all of us, whatever level our playing is at, can select one of four parts, learn it and be part of a mega-performance on the Saturday afternoon. From page 58 you'll find the tab, and online there are instructional videos where Chris guides us through the various sections. So, however capable you are as a guitarist, whatever guitar you have (so long as it's in tune!), get learning and take this opportunity to get involved!

To ensure everything goes smoothly, there will be rehearsal slots prior at the show prior to the performance. We've not done anything like this before, but it's going to be a blast.

And on the day, remember, don't rush and enjoy it!

Enjoy the issue.

Steve Harvey
Editor

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ACOUSTIC NEWS DESK

FOR THE LATEST NEWS VISIT **WWW.ACOUSTICMAGAZINE.COM**

FUSION'S NEW UKE BAGS

Fusion has added to its Urban Series with a range of products for ukulele players. The Urban Series Ukulele gig bags cater for all the popular ukuleles including baritone/bass, concert/tenor and soprano, while the 'Urban Double' can effortlessly house a pair of ukuleles, including combinations of tenors, concerts and sopranos.

The inside features a soft non-scratch, non-fibrous, velvet-mix interior with strategically placed panels to shield the instrument's headstock and end-pin, while the exterior has a lightweight yet extremely robust 20mm (0.7in) foam shell, with a tough, water resistant, Jacquard polyester rip-stop material that's defiant against scuffs and abrasions.

Retail prices start at: Concert/Tenor model, £89.95; Baritone/Bass model, £99.95; and Urban Double, £119.95.
More info at ***www.fusion-bags.com***

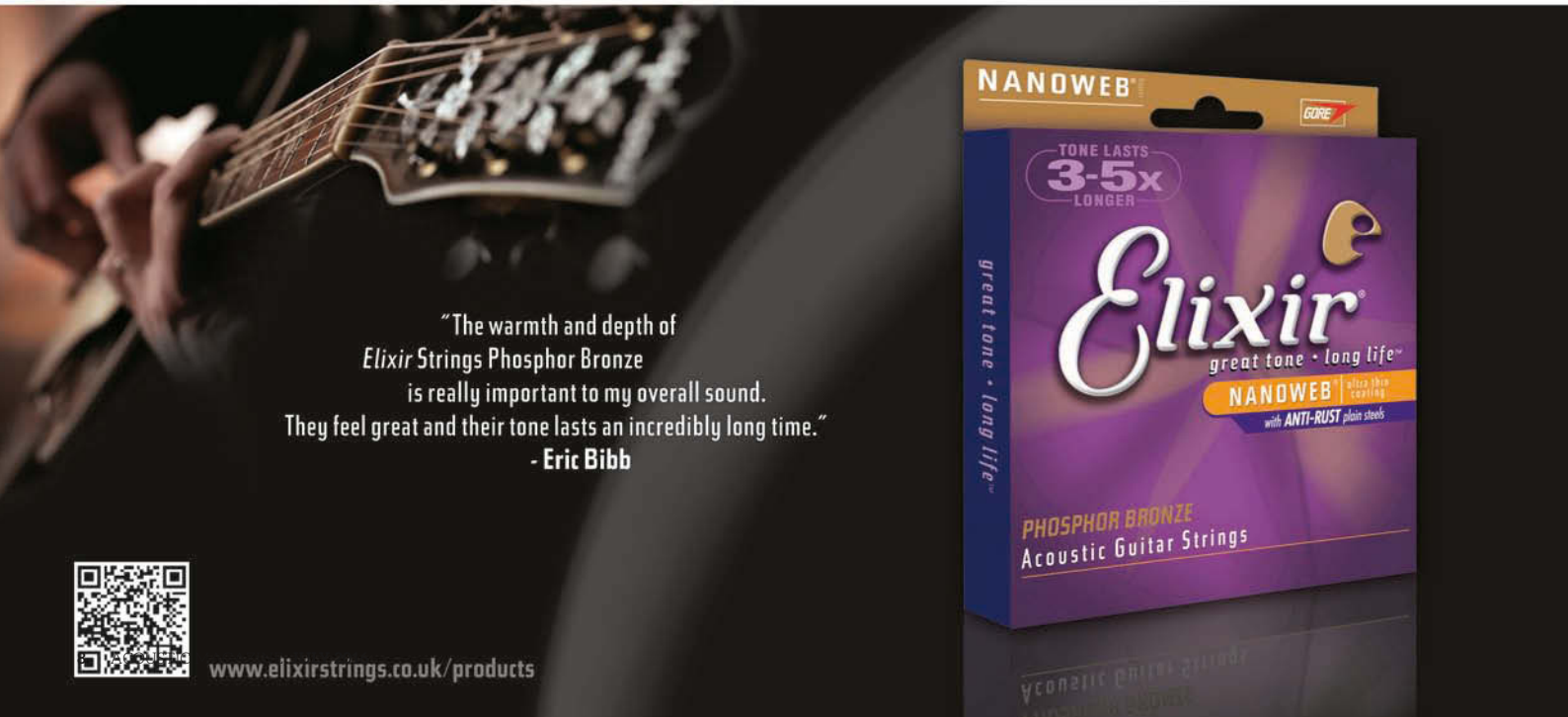
D-DAY MANDOLIN

Vintage has reproduced a mandolin that was owned by an American soldier who survived landing on Omaha beach on D-Day. The soldier returned to Torquay after the landings to gift the instrument to the lady whose house he was billeted in before 6 June 1944.

The 1940 Regal Mandolin was inscribed with a message from the solider which reads: "God helped us. USS LCT 639 hit (Omaha) beach off France on June 6 1944." The servicemen from USS LCT 639 also etched their names into the back and upper sides of the instrument.

Thanks to detective work from Hilary Giltrap (wife of Gordon), the instrument's story was brought into the spotlight and Vintage decided to reproduce it as 'a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made over 70 years ago by those remarkable servicemen and women, and the importance of musical instruments in raising morale during wartime conflict.'

Featuring a white ash body, with Nyatoh neck and Indonesian Rosewood fingerboard, including aged hardware as a 'nod' to the original, the D-Day Mandolin is tonally responsive and very easy to play. Supplied with a zero gravity carry case, the D-Day Mandolin is endorsed by Gordon Giltrap.
Info: ***www.jhs.co.uk***



LOWDEN S-35M

Lowden has announced a new model: the S-35M, the company's first guitar with a hardwood top. This model is made with AAAA fiddleback mahogany for the back, sides and top with a slightly adjusted bracing to compensate for the harder top.

This model is also the first Lowden to feature hand made Robson Open Gear tuners. We'll be bringing a full review of the Lowden S-35M in an upcoming issue.

SPECS
Model: S-35M
Back/Sides: AAAA fiddleback mahogany
Top: AAAA fiddleback mahogany
Bindings: Indian rosewood
Neck: Five-piece mahogany with rosewood
Fingerboard: Ebony w/ maple & ebony bindings
Scale: 630mm
Tuners: Robson Open Gear tuners with ebony buttons

VIVA ESPAÑA

Manuel Rodriguez has fully reissued its 'Handmade in Spain' range of guitars. The newly revamped models come direct from the hands of dozens of skilled luthiers at the busy factory in Esquivias, Toledo.

The range runs across the full price spectrum, with the MR10 retailing at £349 and the FC Pro Cedar Classic setting you back £1599.

At *Acoustic* HQ our eyes were drawn to the electro-acoustic cutaway MCR11 from the Cabellero range (pictured), which comes with either a solid cedar or German spruce top and sports a Fishman Presys for amplified playing and costs £599.

While for those looking to spend a bit more, the D Madagascar Classic (£1499) comes with a Red cedar and solid spruce top with laminate Madagascar rosewood back and sides. The ebony/cedar neck has an ebony fingerboard and Indian rosewood bridge and headstock. Gold plated machine heads and a bone saddle/nut complete its impressive spec.

Manuel Rodriguez guitars are distributed in the UK by John Hornby Skewes & Co. For more information head to ***www.jhs.co.uk.***

MARTIN BOOSTS JUNIOR AND ROAD SERIES

C.F Martin & Co. has used the annual Summer NAMM show to reveal a slew of new guitars.

First up, the new D Jr. 2 Sapele (£499), an addition to the popular Junior range, which features a sapele top, back and sides and will be available without electronics, or equipped with Fishman Sonitone electronics (D Jr. 2E Sapele – £599).

Adding to the already popular Road Series, Martin has introduced the DRSG. It has a Sitka spruce top and siris back and sides, a Richlite fingerboard and bridge, gloss body, hand rubbed neck finish and Fishman Sonitone electronics and will retail at £1079.

On top of these, there are seven new X Series Cutaway guitars featuring Sonitone electronics including three new Dreadnought cutaways: DCXAE Black, DCX1RAE and DCX1AE; three GPC models: GPCXAE Black (pictured), GPCX1RAE and GPCX1AE; and the OMCXAE Black. Prices range between £635 and £679. For full information about all the new Martin models, visit ***www.martinguitar.com.***

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ACOUSTIC NEWS DESK

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CHARITY AUCTION FOR PAPWORTH HOSPITAL

John Duffield got in touch with *Acoustic* recently to tell us a fantastic story that combined some of favourite things: charity, the celebration of homegrown lutherie and a whole lot of endeavour.

After undergoing heart valve replacement surgery at Papworth Hospital, Mr Duffield organised a concert with *Acoustic* contributor Clive Carroll in the small North Bedfordshire village of Stevington. As Mr Duffield told us: "That first gig was expected to be a one off but such was its success nine years on we have held concerts every year, raised in excess of £15,000 for charities and brought some of the best guitarists in the world to rural Bedfordshire."

It was after one such concert that Simon Hewlett, an award-winning furniture maker who has recently started making guitars under the tutelage of Kif Wood, reached out to Mr Duffield with the offer to build him a one off guitar (pictured) to be auctioned at an upcoming Stevington Concert, with the proceeds going to Papworth Hospital.

Mr Duffield said: "We are overwhelmed by the generosity of their offer and the hours of skilled work they have dedicated to the project. The instrument will be auctioned and presented to its new owner at a special concert in the autumn."

To find out more about the guitar and the concert series (which will see Clive Carroll perform once again on 18-19 November), visit ***www.stevingtonguitarconcerts.co.uk.***

GUITARS ON STANDBY

Standby Guitars is a new company providing players and collectors with bespoke, premium quality guitar stands. Based in Stirling in central Scotland, guitar collector Andy Hepburn had long strived to find an appropriate guitar stand to display his collection in style. On finding nothing suitable aesthetically or functionally, Hepburn took it upon himself to create his own stand.

He tells us: "It's really exciting to be able to launch the brand and start sharing these stands with other enthusiasts and collectors. There are no other stands like them, and I'm very passionate about giving people like myself the opportunity to show off their collection in the manner it truly deserves. These stands are hand-made with genuine care and attention, and with the appropriate love, time and effort, the perfect guitar stand can be created to suit anyone's specific requests."

The stands can be viewed at ***www.standbyguitars.co.uk***

HOLY GRAIL EXHIBITORS CONFIRMED

The luthier line-up for the 2016 Holy Grail Guitar Show will feature 135 of the world's most inventive guitar makers.

In addition to familiar faces from previous shows, there will also be superb instruments on display from new exhibitors from as far afield as Turkey, Argentina, Singapore, Lithuania and Canada. Familiar faces heading to the show include Lowden, Atkin Guitars, AC Guitars, Kostal, Rozawood and Turnstone Guitar Company.

The show takes place on 8-9 October at the Estrel Hotel, Berlin. Keep an eye out on these pages for more updates as we get them. You can see the full exhibitor list at **www.holygrailguitarshow.com.**

ASK THE EXPERTS

THE MU DISHES OUT TIPS FOR TOUR ACCOMMODATION

©Dave Amsler

Booking reasonably priced, convenient and safe accommodation for after a show – be it a one-nighter in a far-flung town or part of a longer run – is a perennial worry. Working a long way from friends and family requires a special resilience, and landing up in sub-standard accommodation run by indifferent owners can turn even the dream engagement into a living nightmare. But it doesn't have to be like that.

THE DIGS LIST

Need to find a place to stay? Your first port of call is the venue's digs list, its catalogue of approved flats, rooms, bed and breakfasts and hotels.

If you're staying in someone's house, it is important to establish ground rules early on. You should ask about details such as when the owner wants to be paid, access, spare keys, and let them know the times of day or night you are likely to be working. Musicians on long engagements also need to discuss how and when friends and family are able to visit.

Demand for good digs often outstrips supply. Book early if you can. If you can't get something off the digs list then you will have time to look elsewhere. If a venue doesn't have a digs list, it's not the end of the world. Specialist websites for theatrical digs and social media communities dedicated to finding accommodation can help you out.

TRY SHARING

If you're going with a group, you may find renting a house a better option. "We realised we could rent a house for a week and that worked out cheaper and better," says Jamie Pullman, MU regional officer for East and South East England. "Good digs probably don't make an enormous amount of difference to your performance, but they do make an enormous amount of difference to your wellbeing and quality of life. It can be a miserable experience sitting in a B&B all day. That's why renting a house is so much better. It gives you a much more homely feel."

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

The nearer you are to your venue, the better. If you are forced to stay further out, think about how you are going to get to the venue and back. Are you driving or car sharing? In which case, where can you park? Is there public transport? And how long will it take?

Security is another frequent concern when booking somewhere to stay. The lack of affordable accommodation close to venues can mean long walks back to digs late at night after a performance. It's always advisable to find somewhere as close as possible to the venue and arrange to walk back with others if you can.

SURVIVING ON A PITTANCE

When booking, talk to the accommodation provider and be direct with them. See if you can get a discount rate. There's no harm in asking, and they are more likely to offer preferential rates to people with whom they have had direct contact.

You may have to pay in advance, at least a deposit. It's a big ask for musicians on increasingly tight budgets, whether that's an allowance or coming out of your own pocket, and you need to take that into account when organising your tour or trip. ■

Information

CIRCE'S DINER

Rosa Buck and Bronte Shande from Circe's Diner discuss their new EP October and playing for the king of TV baking, Paul Hollywood

WORDS: MORGAN MATTHEWS

After chatting to Rosa Buck and Bronte Shande of Bristol four-piece Circe's Diner for a few minutes, you would think they had known each other since childhood. The girls ricochet and rebound off of one another enough to make one relieved their voices are so different, otherwise it could prove difficult to decipher. This connection bodes well so far for the band, which, with the release of new EP *October*, is really picking up speed.

"The connection was there straight away," says Shande. "Rosa and I met through uni and we had already seen each other perform and wanted to work together. One night she invited me round and we had a sing in her kitchen and we just forgot where the time went. I had never enjoyed singing so much before."

"We struck up a strong friendship," Buck continues, "which is great for the band, to have that closeness as well as a real love for the music we are playing."

Their music has a certain easy-going festival charm, yet always keeps its shape and precision. "We have never really thought about our music with theory in mind," says Shande. "It's always been about trusting our gut feeling. And that was what started us playing with the boys. We felt we needed a drummer with quite a full sound, so we asked Pete [Catada] to play with us and it was amazing. He's also my boyfriend," she says, to laughter and shouting from Buck: "He saw her singing and just knew!"

"He's been with us for a little over a year," Shande adds, "and Ben [Tunnicliffe] has been with us for a little under a year."

The band members all attend the Bristol Institute of Modern Music (BIMM), with Buck studying songwriting and Shande vocals.

> **"We've never thought about our music with theory in mind. It's always been about trusting our gut feeling"**

"I definitely see myself as a songwriter first and foremost," says Buck. "I have quite a laid-back vocal delivery that is quite conversational. I write lyrics at the same time as the melody, but I'm very driven by a story; everything I write is quite autobiographical, I like to have that truth in there."

"I'm very melody-based," adds Shande, "so I would say I'm definitely a singer first. It took me a long time to be comfortable with my own songs and my own music. I think now I'm much less autobiographical and tend to write lyrics reflecting on other people's experiences and blending them with my observations. But when it comes to writing the band's songs, usually in Rosa's kitchen with a glass of wine, our lyrics and melodies

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Mike Finnigan – performed with Jimi Hendrix, Etta James, Ringo Starr, Leonard Cohen, Rod Stewart and Tower of Power

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come together very easily and the whole thing is very much a collaboration."

They come across as a tight group of players, who are completely unafraid of hard work and getting themselves out on the scene and heard. One little bonus for the effort was playing for the winners of last year's darling television show *The Great British Bake Off*. "We got to try all of the cakes!" says Buck. "And we got to meet Mel and Sue and Paul. It was great, and it came about at the last minute, when somebody spotted us at a Bristol gig. We're so grateful for these opportunities, but I do think that one thing we are good at as a band is putting ourselves out there. And there is a real sense of achievement when you get noticed. Even when somebody answers an email, I feel a sense of success. And I send a lot of emails. But it does all come from hard work and having the right people around you and being committed to our craft. This music is really at the forefront of our minds."

The band's new release, the EP *October*, is a focused affair without an ounce of fat or filler in sight. "We actually have a couple of albums worth of songs that aren't on there," explains Shande. "Nothing is ever very well planned with us, so the whole thing coming together was quite organic. We had some rough demos out before, but we realised that we needed to get more music out there. People were asking for it too, which was great. On our UK tour, which has just finished, the reaction these songs got was amazing. We even had two lovely old ladies crying their eyes at one of the shows! I think I cried at that show too ["We all cried!", shouts Buck]. But in a humble way, we really needed that tour to be well received, because both of us haven't always been as confident in our music, so it was really special to have such a great reaction to the songs."

It's a cohesive set of seven songs, so more like a mini-album, with a fairly broad range of sounds on display. "As it was our first release," says Buck, "and although we are quite a definitive sounding band, we wanted to put a set of songs out that showcased a diverse range to the listener."

It does that effectively, mixing their folky sound with Americana and, notably on 'Tiger King', carnival and circus. "*October* has already really improved our song writing," says Shande. "I think we are both secret musical theatre fans, and I also really enjoy jazz music, so to be able to express yourself in that way, to really let go and not care what anyone thinks is a wonderful feeling. There are so many variables to performing a gig; songs can change meaning depending on what mood you're in or for any other reason. It's amazing to be playing music in a band that allows that change. I've never felt as comfortable with a bunch of musicians as I do with Rosa and the boys. It just flows and it feels very special." ■

***October* is out now.**

ROSA'S GUITAR PLAYING

"I play a Tanglewood electro-acoustic guitar, which is made from mahogany and there's a little bit of tortoise shell on there. I don't know much more than that except that she is beautiful and I love her very much. I play simple stuff, because that's how good I am. I mean of course it's a stylistic choice! I've also just bought myself a banjo, so keep an ear out for my new song 'Banjo Blues'. Bronte hasn't heard it yet though – she might think it's a load of crap!"

FOY VANCE

Foy Vance, the moustachioed countryman recently signed to Ed Sheeran's record label, discusses his upcoming record The Wild Swan and his relationship with Lowden guitars

WORDS: EMILY BIELBY **IMAGES:** SARAH BARLOW & STEPHEN SCHOFIELD

"I'm a firm believer that each song should be approached in a way that suits it, so it's more like a collection rather than I went in with an idea of what I wanted the album to sound like," admits Foy when asked about his upcoming record, *The Wild Swan*, which will be the first released on his friend Ed Sheeran's label Gingerman Records, and is produced by Grammy-winner Jacquire King. "Jacquire is a great guy to work with; he takes what he does very seriously which is great. He's also worked on one of my favourite records of all time, *Mule Variations* by Tom Waites, and that's why I worked with him. I know he's done some more recent stuff but I haven't really heard too much of that – I have heard the work he did with Tom Waites and that was enough for me," he says.

This record will be Vance's third studio album, and it's his unique blend of Irish charm and soul that has seen his popularity grow rapidly and with stars giving him thumbs-up, it seems he might get what he quite rightly deserves. Before being thrown under the spotlight, Vance had been singing in bands on and off since he was about 16, before going on to join a soul covers band. "We were playing three or four nights a week, for the most part just playing Aretha Franklin, Wilson Pickett, Percy Sledge and all that old kind of stuff and I was just lost in the absolute pleasure of making music," he says.

Like many musicians, his first encounter with the guitar happened early. "My dad was a great player and he was self-taught so he had all those little idiosyncrasies that come with that; he sort of flat-picked but he picked in his own way, which I've inherited because he taught me" says Vance. "My first memory of the acoustic guitar and falling in love with it was hearing my dad play it; one time when we lived on an estate in Ireland called Breeze Mount I'd come home from school and we had this kitchen door that had a glass panel in it and I could hear my dad singing and playing guitar in the kitchen. I looked in and this wasn't dad at parties, this wasn't dad at a wedding getting the guitar and singing a song, it was him on his own, completely lost in music. He taught me how to play 'House Of The Rising Sun' and the '12 Bar Blues', I always remember that."

> **"Years later I was chatting to George Lowden about my guitar and he winced and said 'I actually designed that'"**

He adds: "He definitely gave me the fundamental techniques and the passion for playing, then when you start hearing people like John Martyn, Nick Drake, Joni Mitchell, Van Morrison and Bob Dylan as guitar players, all delivering music that feels real, it was like an explosion of sound. I learned from everything and everybody for a long time just by listening and trying to cover that stuff."

A similar approach was taken with his fingerpicking learning, with Vance admitting to falling into it: "When you're practising the F chord which is notoriously difficult to get when you first start playing, you're struggling and your fingers and wrist are getting sore and then just one day you get to it and it works, it was kind of like that with the fingerpicking. I would hear my dad play all the time and I would try and emulate it all the time and then one day I could."

As we were discussing stories of his childhood, Vance tells me about the first guitar he ever bought, which features on the new record on a song called 'Coco'. "I picked it up from a guy called Lester Robinson and I think he picked it up off the back of a van, but it was in his house and he said that it was for sale," he says. "I instantly went back to my house and said to my dad 'My friend's uncle has got this guitar and he's going to sell it,' and then we went down and it was in a hard case and it turns out it was a Flambeau LFW-5. George Lowden will hate me for this, but Flambeau is something that he designed back in the late 70s or early 80s. He designed the soundboard for it, but it was shipped out and made in Japan, I didn't know that at the time, I just thought it was a cheap guitar, so we bought it for 20 quid. I love the sound of that guitar, it's aged beautifully. It was only years and years later when I was chatting to George about it and he sort of pulled a wry grin, winced a little bit and said 'I actually designed that guitar.'"

Having been a long-time fan and friend of George Lowden, Vance is keen to stress the importance of Lowden guitars in achieving his unique acoustic sound. "I love any good guitar, but there's something about Lowdens. I guess growing up they were the *pièce de résistance* for all us guys. George is a passionate guy; he's very zen and almost spiritual about making these guitars. He uses these ancient Japanese joinery tools to shave parts of the neck and he swears that they make all the difference; to me it doesn't really matter if it does or not, the fact that he's putting that kind of care and attention into it lets you know that you're getting something special, then the second you play it, right from the bass to the treble and everything in between, all sings like a bird".

Unsurprisingly, his collection comprises mainly Lowdens, although he does confess to sharing a love of vintage guitars too. "I've got a lot of Lowdens just because I've been collecting them over the years and my collection of them includes a Lowden O10, Lowden O35 Custom, a Wee Lowden, Lowden Baritone, Lowden Custom (Bushmills Whiskey Barrell) but I also play that Flambeau, and have an Ernie McMillan Mando guitar. I love old Gibsons, Martins, and Harmony Sovereigns, I just love guitars, and the second I can afford to pick up some vintage stuff I will. When we were recording in Blackbush Studios in Nashville, their guitar collection was just insane, and for the music that I was playing, those guitars suited, so there's a lot of the old Martin on there, a couple of the Gibsons, and then there's some Flambeau and a couple with the Lowden. Guitars let you know what kind of song they want to play; there are sort of songs that the Lowden wouldn't work on that the Gibson would, and there are certain songs that the Gibson and a Martin wouldn't work on, but the Lowden just ploughs through like a knife through butter."

> **"I learned from everything and everybody for a long time just by listening and trying to cover all that stuff"**

Vance explains a bit more about the joint Lowden and Bushmills venture, which resulted in him being given a guitar made out of whiskey barrels. "Bushmills do a sort of music festival called Bushmills Live, and I was playing that and when I got there they'd made a couple of these guitars; I think they made one for Justin Vernon from Bon Iver, one for Gary Lightbody from Snow Patrol and they made one for me. It's got the Bushmills whiskey barrel on the back, and the neck and the face of the guitar is something else. I remember when I first saw it though, it looked a bit too thin, and I was hoping it was going to be big, fat, chunky and old looking but then I played it and thought that George had worked his magic yet again," he laughs.

The Northern Irishman's plans for the rest of the year consist of mainly touring: "I've got a support tour with Elton John coming up in July, I've got some festivals through the summer and then I'll be doing my own world tour around Australia, America, UK, and Europe at the end of the year." ■

Pictured: FA400GACEF

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AL DI MEOLA

Al Di Meola is quite simply one of the finest guitarists on the planet. His acoustic pyrotechnics have underpinned the cross-genre musicality that's been the hallmark of his career. Teri Saccone sits down with the great man

WORDS: TERI SACCONE

Al Di Meola has unleashed the talismanic power of the guitar throughout an evolutionary career. Although he emerged as an absurdly gifted fusion artist at the age of 19 in Chick Corea's *Return to Forever,* Di Meola has never confined himself to those origins. During his 40-year career he's fearlessly explored Latin jazz, world music, flamenco, tango, and pop via solo material and legendary collaborations. Reinvention and boundary-pushing are his signatures on albums like *Land of the Midnight Sun, Pursuit of Radical Rhapsody* and *Elegant Gypsy*. Despite being the very definition of a virtuoso, Di Meola is uncomfortable basking in his vast accomplishments. After some personal setbacks, Di Meola is today renascent, invigorated by becoming a father again last year and touring to support last year's release, *Elysium*. In person – we meet when Di Meola is in London to play dates at Ronnie Scott's – he is introspective, a bit manic and yet deceptively youthful. He speaks frankly and informatively about guitars and some of the vulnerabilities being a professional muso for the long haul.

Elysium was intended to be an entirely acoustic affair, but, having tried out a new pedalboard brought to him by his former guitar tech, Di Meola altered to half electric. "My old tech mentioned this amazing foot pedal he developed on Facebook," he recounts. "I've never really been a fan of the multi-unit pedal and I'd always preferred to go right into an amp. But he conjured up my curiosity so I got in contact with him and he brought over a big, homemade, but totally pro board with his Les Paul and an amp."

Like many musicians Di Meola is plagued with severe hearing issues, which were another factor in his preference for acoustic guitars for a period until 2015. "Another reason I hadn't touched a Les Paul for a long time in favour of acoustic was due to my tinnitus. It's catastrophic. In fact, I talk to Pete Townshend regularly about the misery of it as we share the same affliction. It's 24/7. If you focus on it too much, it'll drive you insane. The more noise in the room the better, as without noise the tinnitus is deafening. Onstage I can still hear and it's not a problem live. So the electric had made the predisposition for this worse. All musicians suffer hearing loss to some degree, and out of those, only one in 20 will be predisposed to tinnitus as it's a genetic condition. So I shied away from electric due to that. But I picked up his Les Paul and started playing the music from *Elysium* and it felt like going home again: it sounded great, and I realised I missed electric a lot. Since I was already reluctantly planning an electric tour at the time, I recorded it with electric. So the electric found its way back to me last year. But no matter what, all the songs, the crux, the meat of the music, start with the most complex, arpeggiated harmonic changes and syncopation, so the hard parts are always on acoustic. The melodies can be played on either.

Some were on acoustic while others were on a Les Paul, but the album is a little more than 50 per cent acoustic."

The predecessor to *Elysium*, his Beatles covers collection *All Your Life*, was totally acoustic and although he exploits both to the optimum, he has stated categorically that, "I express myself better on acoustic." Di Meola contextualises this further: "I certainly express myself differently on acoustic especially with regards to rhythm. If I play strumming type of rhythms, especially a multitude of variations of Latin, I'd never go there on an electric. Plus you think and feel differently with an electric guitar. The acoustic separates the men from the boys, so to speak, in that the technique is different and there is nothing to hide behind, whereas with electric there's a ton of volume to hide behind, which many do. Plus you can use tapping, glissandos and other trickery. But when it comes to articulated picking with the right hand, you can't get away with stuff as you can with amplification of the electric, so with acoustic there's no cheating."

Di Meola makes no secret that he underwent an acrimonious divorce during the recording of both albums. "Making *Elysium*, I knew it was not going to be as accessible as *All Your Life*. I wanted this to be a little more adventurous and it is. It's not as commercial as my other stuff. But then my personal life is not as simple as it was when I was younger. I have a complex life: ex-wives, kids, homes in Miami, Munich, and New Jersey, so life is complicated, and I'm dealing with all of that and various health issues too."

Di Meola is not only one of the most well-respected guitarists alive, he's also a drummer (playing drums on some of his own recordings), and his understanding of rhythms and polyrhythms are illustrated when he plays acoustic as he uses his foot as a metronome. That timekeeping is crucial to his guitar playing. "I think it's something you either discover you have or you don't have," he suggests. "The inner clock that some of us have is in-built. Not to sound harsh, but I think many guitarists have a tremendous problem with timing. And if they don't play with a drummer they're dead. I notice this phenomenon in clinics often. Growing up in suburban New York I spent lots of time hanging out in Latin music clubs in Manhattan absorbing the rhythms. If you

can feel what they're doing and take some of those rhythms and apply them to guitar, then you're way ahead. The most important thing is maintaining a steady quarter note rhythm by tapping your foot and then use the upper half of your body to play in syncopation against that time. So if you can keep that foot in time regardless of what you do with the upper body then your timekeeping will be perfect. If you let your syncopation affect your foot then it's real bad. Guitar players will usually allow the syncopation of what they're playing to upset that timing. If you do that you don't have the ability to open that giant door to all kinds of fantastic rhythms you could play. So that comes first, keep those rhythms strict then you develop your picking techniques. Some people just don't have it though."

When did he become aware that he had an innate timekeeping ability? "As a teenager I guess. I think I'm by far a better percussionist than I am a guitarist. Hand percussion that is. I'd practise some unorthodox stuff during high school. I'd play constant rhythms on the desktop all day every day instead of paying attention to the teacher. I have no idea what gave me the impulse to develop that."

When it comes to songwriting, Di Meola takes a subconscious, intuitive approach to composing rather than a deliberate one. "I sit with a guitar, turn on the TV and focus on that and not the guitar and just play a bit. By not focusing I'll inadvertently come up with something that will eventually lead to a new song. From there I'll normally start with the arpeggios that form the structure of a piece, followed by the melody and a bass-line, all with lots of counterpoint. That's the foundation of any written piece of mine. From there, you can take it anywhere you want to go."

Di Meola is acutely aware that the music business paradigm has drastically changed since he started out. "There's no money to be made from recording albums now," he says. "I'm conscious of sales, but we live in a time when most people don't buy music and don't care about buying new music. We have no incentive to make new music when it doesn't earn us money. So no matter how good a record is, it's not going to sell. It's a really 'effed up' time to be a musician."

Does he listen to new music? "There are some good things out there with DJs and hip hop, but there's also a lot of crap too. I don't want to sound like an old guy, but who today is going to make the next *Dark Side of the Moon* or something on the level of a Beatles album or Tears for Fears? There is no budget for that experimental recording these days. It's all changed."

Famed for his extensive collaborations, we ask if there are any new artists he'd like to work with. "I like that kid the Weeknd but I'd make him get a new haircut," he says laughing. We steer away from the hypothetical and towards Di Meola's landmark collaboration with flamenco god and fellow guitar legends John McLaughlin and Paco de Lucía, which resulted in a world tour that culminated in the iconic *Friday Night in San Francisco*. "When we hit the scene it was all about us conversing in depth," he recalls. "It was not like the blues scene where you make one note sing. It's a bunch of bullshit when guitarists claim that one note says more than one hundred. Tell that to a flamenco player playing millions of notes. But it's usually the guys who can't play at all who say those things. Our three egos were set aside as our energies intertwined creatively and it just floated like a dream. That trio elevated all of us to a new level."

He adds: "I guess it was not possible to be objective during the time that we were doing it. It's easier now to reflect on it and I listen back to it. It was the fire of youth. When that began we had a healthy competition. We tried to impress one another. Paco was, and is still, king of flamenco. When it was McLaughlin's turn to take a solo after him, I had to come up with something great. It was so good to push each other during that tour. We'd be up there in front of rabid audiences who wanted to see us knock each other out. It was fun and educational, and we recorded the whole tour and I still have all the tapes. But the last two shows in California were the best of the tour. People still think we sped the tapes up but we just were like lightning, responding to each other and playing our hearts out."

Another career highlight was his amazing turn in supergroup Go. Formed in 1976, Go was comprised of Steve Winwood, percussionist/keyboardist Stomu Yamashta and other greats. Go recorded two studio albums and were a huge critical success. "Playing with Steve Winwood, who I loved both in Traffic and Blind Faith, was a dream come true. I had heard about Stomu when I was at Berklee School of Music. So in 1976 they invited me to London to join that incredible band with Phil Manzanera, Michael Shrieve from Santana, and Klaus Schulze from Tangerine Dream. I walked into the studio the first day and from the hallway I heard Steve and it gave me chills. Only two years before that I was in my friend's garage playing 'Dear Mr Fantasy'. So playing in that with one of my heroes was magical."

As we wrap things up, we ask Di Meola if he was aware that the late musical genius Prince gave an interview in the *Guardian* where he stated that it was Al Di Meola that made him want to play guitar. "I did hear and I was touched by that. I never thought he'd say that, although I was aware that he'd come to some of my shows. Sadly, we never met but that felt nice to hear." ■

AL DI MEOLA'S GUITARS

"I've been primarily using a Conde Hermanos Al Di Meola Custom cutaway nylon with an RMC pickup that connects to my Roland VG88. I also have started using a recently made custom Fylde steel string. I use both D'Addario steel and nylon strings. In the last 10 years I've played the Ovation Signature Model less and less."

PETE YORN

Pete Yorn chats to us about his latest record Arranging Time, his obsession with British music and why his Gibson J-45 is his go-to guitar

WORDS: EMILY BIELBY **IMAGES:** BETH KALTMAN

New Jersey born Pete Yorn first gained international recognition after releasing his debut record *Musicforthemorningafter*, 13 years in and he has five more studio albums under his belt, including his latest record *Arranging Time*, which was released in March and is his first solo album in five years. Yorn can't hide his enthusiasm about the record.

"It's a homemade DIY record, recorded at my little home studios. I just recorded it with friends of mine that I've known over the years," he tells us. "I took a layering approach. I usually start it off with either a beat, drum or loop, guitar or piano and just build on top of that. I don't make these concept albums; it's always more of an inspiration for me. I just kind of let music flow out of me."

> **"I think as a drummer I have pretty good rhythm and my guitar playing style is always very percussive"**

Hot off his US tour in support of *Arranging Time*, we were keen to find out more about the guitars that accompanied him on the road. "I'm not that much of a gear head. I like to keep things pretty simple; I played a lot of acoustic guitar on this tour, in fact almost exclusively my Gibson J-45 Rosewood. I'm happy if my guitar stays in tune or if I don't break a string, and if I've got a guitar in my hand that's working and staying in tune, I often keep it."

The Gibson J-45 is a popular and almost iconic choice dating back to the 1940s, but what made it fit for Yorn's purpose? "The Gibson J-45 is my main guitar because it behaves," laughs Yorn. "My other acoustic that I use on tour as a backup is a Gibson Dove. They're both really nice, but the J-45 just sounds a little bit better through a PA right now for some reason. I have this guitar wizard in Burbank, California and he just set that thing up where it just doesn't go out of tune. I did a lot of solo acoustic touring last year where it was just me and that guitar for two hours and I wouldn't even tune the whole show."

Yorn's inspiration and early passion for music is something he credits as a factor in his later success, confessing that he was a big REM fan growing up in the 80s. He has had a lifelong obsession with British music, in particular the Clash, the Smiths and the Cure. "Early on I was into Iron Maiden and Judas Priest; my older brothers would just expose me to a lot of the music that I would later end up getting into.

"When I was really little, my brothers were in high school and that's what they

were listening to. When they went to college they came back and were like 'check this out' and it was 'Big Mouth Strikes Again' by the Smiths and 'In Between Days' by The Cure, and at that point I thought that music really made me feel something and also made me want to write songs."

Yorn's brothers not only exposed him to music, but also taught him how to play the drums, but it was later on, as a 12-year-old in summer camp, he realised his love for the guitar. "I saw some people playing guitar and they were also playing songs by the Smiths and I thought it was so cool, they showed me some chords and then I naturally just started writing songs right away."

However, Yorn wasn't always as driven as he later found himself to be, he reflects back on a school memory he had of seventh grade. "There was mandatory guitar class at my public school and everyone had to do it. I got a B in it because I didn't pay attention and I couldn't be bothered to do the chords.

> **"I saw some people playing guitar and they were playing songs by the Smiths... I thought it was so cool"**

All you had to do to pass the course was know all the first division chords and I didn't learn anything."

Most of his practising and learning was on his mum's old Yamaha FG-45 from the 1960s, which only had a couple of strings, but the first guitar bought for him was from his dad. "I'd had my eye on it, it was at a little guitar shop in New Jersey and I would see this guitar hanging on the wall. It was an Alvarez thin line acoustic which had a little cutaway too so you could reach the higher frets. I still have it in my storage space, but it's all beat up. It's a very sentimental piece, though."

Like many guitarists that have come before him, Pete spent many days and nights trying to play the songs that first influenced him on his Alvarez, the first of them being, 'Every Rose Has Its Thorn' by Poison and 'Blister In The Sun' by Violent Femmes: "I used to play that all the time and that was easy because that was just one string. 'Smoke On The Water' was another and then I think I quickly learnt 'Driver 8' by REM, too. I got really obsessed with that kind of fast strumming. I think as a drummer I have pretty good rhythm and my guitar playing style is always very percussive, rhythmic acoustic." ■

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JASON HUXLEY

What are the characteristics of a successful working musician? We ask the hardworking multi-instrumentalist Jason Huxley

WORDS: GRAHAM HAZELWOOD **IMAGES:** LUKE H PHOTOGRAPHER

It's a Friday night in the Kent stockbroker belt, and a small music venue is slowly emptying after a storming gig from the British country pop-rock trio Honey Ryder. Lead guitarist Jason Huxley is relaxing onstage, sipping a cold beer and chatting to fans. Gigging live must be amazing, right?

The band, which includes singer Lindsay O'Mahony and electric guitarist Matt Bishop, first entered the public consciousness in 2008, when their indie rock single 'Numb' – assisted by a slick promotional video featuring Lindsay in a variety of gentle bondage scenarios – broke into the mainstream top 40.

"The original guitarist was Martyn Shone, and at the time I was just a session guitarist," Huxley says. "Martyn was into Radiohead and a lot of seriously heavy music – as well as Fleetwood Mac – and that influenced the band at the beginning. Now we've got essences of country, folk and a bit of indie, I suppose. We do love a bit of rock, but we rein it in if it's getting too heavy."

Jason joined the band 'proper' shortly afterwards, and they steadily became one of the best-known acts on the British country music scene, recording three albums and supporting major label artists such as Texas and Michael Bolton. In 2010, they were invited to Nashville by Dixie Chicks and Lady Antebellum producer Paul Worley, who teamed them up with top songwriters and state-of-the-art studios.

"Wherever you go in Nashville at any time of the day, there's a band… and they're all stunning musicians," he adds. "It was a bit of pressure at first to be honest, because I'm just some guy from Stoke. But when we got there, the people put us at ease."

Energised by the atmosphere in the city, the band wrote and recorded four tracks and formed solid working relationships with the Nashville inner circle.

Last year, the British Country Music Association recognised their achievements by nominating the band for Group of the Year, UK Song of the Year and UK Album of the Year.

> **"Wherever you go in Nashville, there's a band… and they're all stunning musicians. It was a bit of pressure at first to be honest, because I'm just some guy from Stoke"**

Huxley gives us a quick recap on the modern meaning of 'country'. "It used to be 'country and western', so you get the guys in the Stetsons and the pedal steel," he explains. "These days it's a crossover, and I see it in a lot of bands who write good lyrics and a great story. In Nashville they write stories, not love songs."

The band are currently writing stories for their fourth album, which is due out next year, and continuing to experiment with their sound. "I've written a song with brass on it," Huxley admits. "We're staying firmly in the country crossover mould, but who knows? It's nice to surprise people."

To supplement his band work and enjoy a little creative exercise, Jason takes time out to play solo gigs, usually with a Line 6 DL4 delay at his feet. To see what's possible as a one-man band, head over to YouTube and check out his live recording of 'With or Without You by U2'.

Industry insiders may also know Jason for his session work, and he's happy to offer advice to wannabe sidemen.

"The main thing is discipline," he says. "You've got to be punctual, your gear's got to work, you've got to play in time and it's got to be bang on the beat. I'll sit in a room with the composer, and he'll say, "Can you play this?" or "Can you improvise around this?" That's the other side of it, the creative part. I worked with Ty Unwin on a programme called *Banged Up Abroad*, and he asked me to come up with eight pieces of blues! So I composed all that music. Session players have to be technically accomplished, but equally need to be open to take direction and play things outside their comfort zone occasionally. You have to be as malleable as possible and respect the composer's creative vision as well as giving your own perspective. Other things come into the picture. Can you get to that 9am session at Kings Cross even though you live four hours away? Are you a friendly person who gives

off positivity? The best guys have all of these qualities, and once they know you can do something, you get the work."

One particular session was for a production company, which had links to the American film producer Harvey Weinstein, and Jason was offered work on TV shows such as *Inside Death Row with Trevor McDonald* and *Mad Dogs*. With a growing reputation in the business, he was then hired to record the Davy Graham track 'Anji' for the Hollywood movie *Bobby*.

"The Paul Simon version cost a lot, so I was asked to replicate it, note for note," he recalls. "It was great to sit to the end of the movie and see 'Anji performed by Jason Huxley'. We were the last two people in there, and the cleaner was sweeping up around us."

Jason has composed on mandolin, ukulele and balalaika, but his favoured instrument is, predictably, the guitar. His workhorse is a Yamaha APX-8A electro-acoustic, and he also owns a similar APX-4A.

"They've got two microphones inside – the piezo and the ambient mic, and you can blend the two together which sounds stunning," he says. "They're not the best guitars in the studio, but they're awesome live. On the APX you've got parametric EQ on the mids. I like that bottom middle sound, almost making the guitar sound slightly classical."

> **"Session players have to be technically accomplished, but need to be open to take direction and go out of their comfort zone"**

"The first time we went to Nashville I bought a Taylor 310CE," he continues. "It's a great guitar in the studio, but I prefer the sound of the Yamahas live. They've got a middle, a rounded sound with a bite. I've also just got a new Yamaha CGX122MCC electro classical guitar. It's got a cedar top so has a beautiful warm tone. It's fitted with the ART pickup system and it even sounds amazing plugged straight into the mixing desk. I'm bowled over by the quality as it retails around the £350 mark. It's not even had a set-up yet, but it plays great straight out of the box."

"I use two Ashbury AM-10 electro mandolins, one tuned to GDAD and with a capo on the second fret for the songs 'You Can't Say That' and 'In A Heartbeat'. The other is in standard GDAE tuning for 'Worlds Away'. I've also got three acoustics, a Strat and a Gibson 335.

"As well as the DL4, I have an OD-3 OverDrive distortion pedal which I use to crunch up the guitar solo in 'In A Heartbeat', and a Boss AD-7 preamp with reverb, chorus and feedback destroyer. You can shape the sounds quite a lot, and it's surprising how much you can alter things.

"A good sound engineer can make something mediocre sound great. We played at the O2 and it was just a line check. No sound check or anything. The sound engineers were amazing. If you haven't got a good one, you're not going to have a good gig, and with an acoustic guitar you're in the lap of the gods! It's a great feeling when it's going well." ■

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HATTIE BRIGGS

Hattie Briggs, the Gloucester-based songstress who quit her Russian degree at Oxford University to pursue her music career, fills us in on her acoustic background

I would describe my guitar playing style as subtle. I use the guitar very much as an accompaniment to my vocals, which are always the focus. I tend to fingerpick rather than strum and really enjoy making up new patterns that I haven't heard before.

There are far too many overenthusiastic strummers in this world who absolutely hack at their strings so that everything coming out of the guitar turns into an offensively percussive mush. I think that less is more and variation is key – you need the quiet bits to notice the louder strumming, and the fiddly textured bits to contrast with the simpler stuff.

I find that alternative tunings can help keep things interesting and inspire new songs and sounds. It's great when you find a really original-sounding chord that emotes a certain feeling. The tuning can really dictate the feel and meaning of a song.

The first acoustic guitar that I ever played was a cheap half-size model that I got when I was about seven and can't remember the make of! But I'm currently playing a Blueridge BR-63CE6 acoustic guitar and a Gibson ES-347, which used to belong to Dion Warwick's lead guitarist. The Blueridge is my favourite to play, though.

I have a Roland Street Cube that I use for busking, but I'm yet to buy myself a really nice amp to use with the Gibson. I have borrowed amps in the studio until now and on stage I tend to play acoustic. My style and songwriting are very natural so I don't use effects.

My guitar heroes are James Taylor, Eva Cassidy, the Weepies and First Aid Kit. When I was 12 it was Red Hot Chili Peppers and Oasis! The greatest acoustic guitar player? For me that would be James Taylor and Martin Simpson.

I'm touring my second album at the moment. It comes out officially on 8 July, but fans can get their hands on it early if they come along to a gig.

I've got gigs all around England from now till early September (for more info visit www.hattiebriggs.co.uk/current-gigs), and I'm hoping to be over in North America at some point this autumn.

And here's something to remember for acoustic guitar players: research has shown that guitarist's brains are different from other people's brains. They have an ability to synchronise with other guitarists and intuit what is going to happen during a piece of music.

When they are lost in the music, they can also deactivate part of the brain to switch from conscious to unconscious thought – a less practical, more creative way of thinking. ■

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JACK CONMAN

Percussive acoustic upstart Jack Conman brings us up to speed with his goings on

There's way more to an acoustic guitar than people think – you can really play with things like dynamics and percussion which are things I see some people miss out. I'm not fond of using a pick because you limit yourself to either a quiet or a loud pluck/strum, whereas with your fingers you can use the soft part of your finger, your nail, slap the strings with your thumb, pop the strings (like a slap bassist) and also use a palm flick technique like a flamenco guitarist.

The first acoustic I played was a Richwood RD-12. I chose it as an 11-year-old because I thought it looked like Marcus Mumford's Martin D-28. It did me well for the £90 my mum paid for it.

I was always a pretty shy and introverted kid who liked to do things by himself, so I quickly became quite heavily involved in playing it, almost obsessively. It was a massive identity thing at first, but after that it just became clear that I had quite a lot to say but not much confidence to say it. That's when I started writing songs.

My current guitar is a Seagull S6 mahogany – it's got a great neck which is wide as hell; perfect for my style of playing. I've played numerous Martin guitars, which I picked up because some of my favourite artists, such as Ben Howard and Matt Corby, play them. I asked for a D-16GT for Christmas one year – I had never even played one, I just knew Matt Corby played the same guitar! Christmas came and went without the D-16GT, but I ended up trying one out in a local guitar shop a few months later and it felt too solid; I couldn't feel the strings vibrating through the body as I played it like I could with my RD-12. It felt reasonably characterless and bland. I loved the sound of it, but I think playability it the number one priority when it comes to acoustics.

I think because I play guitar on my lap and I slap the body as well as playing chords, it becomes a lot easier if I tune the strings to a chord so that I don't have to use as many fingers. Some people think it's cheating, a bit like using a capo, but if you can play a better song with a drop tuning and a capo then why not? I think it makes things more practical.

I'm busy recording and writing new songs. I'm also doing a lot of gigs and promoting my current EP, *Euphoria Springs*. I'm also collaborating with a few producers. It'll all be announced on my website (jackconman.co.uk) or on any of my social media.

I was lucky enough to support Jon Gomm at The Owl Sanctuary in Norwich last year. I think overall his playing is absolutely extraordinary. He rinses every last sound an acoustic guitar can possibly make with his songs. I also really like Ben Howard. I think the main thing that attracted me to his style is the emotion and the use of his pick and go technique. Songs like 'Further Away' and 'Small Things' both convey a lot emotionally just through the guitar playing. The use of dynamics and percussion really do it for me.

In terms of picking a greatest guitarist of all time... I think Jon Gomm is right up there for me, as well as Luca Stricognoli. I've supported them both, so seeing them live was a massive pleasure.

I don't think there is one 'best'. Because what does that even mean? A sprinter who wins a race is an objective winner. I think musicians are in a different league entirely. ■

www.jackconman.co.uk

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SEAGULL MARITIME SWS MAHOGANY GT QIT & S6 ORIGINAL QIT

Loud, always flapping around and trying to steal your chips. But that's enough about Joel McIver. What does he think of these two slinky Seagulls?

WORDS: JOEL MCIVER **IMAGES:** RICHARD ECCLESTONE

These two ravishing-looking Seagulls, with their Burnt Umber finishes, may have looked similar when they landed on the doormat the other day, but in fact they represent two rather different branches of the Canadian company's objectives as luthiers. The Maritime GT, from the SWS – or Solid Wood Series – comes with mahogany back and sides and will set you back around £749. The S6 Original QIT is significantly cheaper at £519 and, according to Seagull themselves, "best represents the Seagull philosophy" So let's run them through their paces – unplugged first, as per the title of this here magazine...

The Maritime GT feels light and uncluttered with features. Pick it up and it sits comfortably on your lap, thanks to the 12.5cm body depth. The solid spruce top complements the mahogany back and sides, with no scratchplate to add complications to the look. That's a double-sided coin, of course: over-enthusiastic strummers may find that the lovely Burnt Umber finish is not improved by pick scratches. The gloss top should prevent the worst of it, though, so have no fear. Seagull claims that the chosen finish for the Maritime GT – a combo of gloss and semi-gloss options – is a balance between protection and a light, elastic feel. Why are we going on about this so much? Because we care about your £749 investment, of course.

You'll need the built-in Godin Quantum tuner to get rolling: it's an easily usable gizmo that responds to the tiniest movement of the machine heads, which sounds obvious but which is important in this case because the GT's headstock and tuners are pretty small, something to bear in mind if you have fingers of the Cumberland sausage persuasion. Small is beautiful when it comes to these instruments, especially when matched with the obvious high quality of the guitar's construction: peek inside the body and you'll see an interesting V-shaped piece of bracing which the boffins at Seagull have obviously deployed for some useful tonal reason. Oh, did we mention tone?

"Dig in hard, picking from the bridge end for extra cut, and you may be taken slightly by the sheer number of decibels at your disposal"

Apply fingers or pick to strings and you'll be rewarded with a widescreen, full-range tone that is most focused on mids and top: this isn't the bassiest acoustic on the market, although you can fix that with a slight roll-on of the low end EQ when you plug in. But why not enjoy the GT's natural tone as it is?

The high mids in particular are there to be enjoyed to the full, enabling a crisp, cutting tone that sounds excellent with six-string chords and downstrokes. With 14 accessible frets from 21, you're not going to be able to benefit from the highest register – so if that's a problem, consider a single-cutaway model instead – but there's more than enough functionality with the existing octave-plus-two neck.

A surprise is the sheer volume of this mid-sized guitar. Dig in hard, picking from the bridge end for extra cut, and you may be taken slightly by the sheer number of decibels at your disposal. Whether this is the result of the bodywoods, the strings, the body dimensions or a product of all or some of these, you may need to reconsider bothering with an amp at all. A 12-string version of the GT would be worth checking out, that's for sure.

Still, if you do choose to plug in via the combined plug socket and strap button – a useful solution which we wish all guitar manufacturers had to stick to by law – you'll

SEAGULL SWS MAHOGANY BURNT UMBER GT QIT

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Seagull
Model: Maritime SWS Mahogany Burnt Umber GT QIT
RRP: £749
Body Size: Dreadnought
Made In: Canada
Top: Spruce
Back and Sides: Solid mahogany
Bridge: Rosewood
Neck: Mahogany
Fingerboard: Rosewood
Frets: 21
Tuners: Seagull branded
Nut Width: 1.8 inches / 45.72mm
Scale Length: 25.5 inches/ 647.7mm
Onboard Electrics: Godin EPM Quantum 1T
Strings Fitted: Godin
Gig Bag/Case Included: No

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Splendid tonal range
Cons: EQ could be a little more generous at this price
Overall: A well-made, capable all-rounder.

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ✪✪✪✪◐
Build Quality: ✪✪✪✪◐
Value for Money: ✪✪✪✪◐
5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor

CONTACT DETAILS

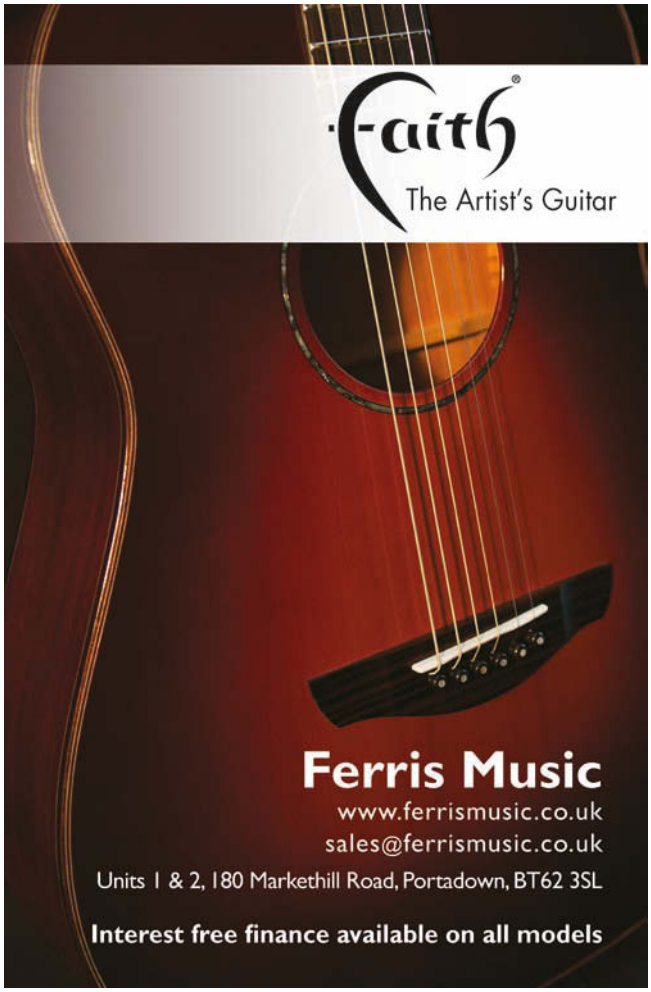
www.seagullguitars.com

"Seagull tells us the S6 has won several awards. What for, we ask? Well, possibly the volume it possesses"

be happy you did so. Add a bit of bass if you need it, bearing in mind the feedback capabilities of whatever room you're playing in, and you'll essentially have found the perfect tone. The GT plays comfortably, loudly and with a wholly adequate range of tones. Sure, the EQ could be more flexible given the price point: the guitar is so full of mids that some players might prefer to cut those frequencies a tad. But we wouldn't. No complaints here whatsoever.

Unplug, stick the Maritime GT back in its case and move over to the S6, a guitar which Seagull tells us has won several awards. What for, we ask? Well, possibly the volume it possesses. We thought the other, more expensive guitar had some power: this one is even louder. And yet the body isn't any deeper. It's a mystery, but a fun one to ponder.

So what's missing from the S6 that the GT gives you for another £140? Not much that we can see. Compare and contrast the two guitars and you'll see that the headstock, fretboard, electronics and most of the other details are identical. However, there's a



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SEAGULL S6 ORIGINAL BURNT UMBER QIT

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Seagull
Model: Seagull S6 Original Burnt Umber QIT
RRP: £519
Body Size: Dreadnought
Made In: Canada
Top: Spruce
Back and Sides: Wild cherry
Bridge: Rosewood
Neck: Silver leaf maple
Fingerboard: Rosewood
Frets: 21
Tuners: Godin branded
Nut Width: 1.8 inches / 45.72mm
Scale Length: 25.5 inches/ 647.7 mm
Onboard Electrics: Godin EPM Quantum 1T
Strings Fitted: Godin
Gig Bag/Case Included: No

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Super-slinky neck, playable neck; full, powerful tone
Cons: Some may feel the guitar is a little generic
Overall: For its price tag, a fantastic find. Highly recommended

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ✪✪✪✪✪
Build Quality: ✪✪✪✪✪
Value for Money: ✪✪✪✪✪
5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor

CONTACT DETAILS

www.seagullguitars.com

"If the S6 represents Seagull's company philosophy, we salute them – it's a better-than-average guitar at an average price"

certain expression to the neck – finished by hand, as you'd hope from a £500 guitar – that makes the S6 stand out, and the semi-gloss, custom polished finish is a little different from its more expensive sibling. The differences are in the feel, and swipe me if it isn't hard to determine why one guitar is pricier than the other.

Component quality and the degree of hand-finish in the construction must be the answer, but you'll really need to play the two guitars side by side to feel the differences between them.

If the S6 does indeed represent Seagull's company philosophy, we salute them, because it's a better-than-average guitar at an average price. Sure, there are plenty of other acoustics around at the £500 mark, even if you don't include played-in second-hand models with that desirable 'older' feel. For the money, though, you're getting eminently playable, finger-friendly feel and tone, while the vast amounts of mid and top end, plus the unusually generous volume headroom, give the Seagulls serious added value. We're impressed. ■

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LÂG GUITARS

STEHR AUDITORIUM OREGON MYRTLE

Built in the shadows of Washington State's Rocky Mountain, Stehr's guitars are perhaps the region's 'best-kept secret', but that's about to change...

WORDS: STEPHEN BENNETT **IMAGES:** THE ACOUSTIC MUSIC COMPANY

Maybe the most familiar fact about Spokane, Washington – possibly the only one, for us in the UK – is that it's pronounced without the 'e'. Joel Stehr, the town's most noted guitar-presence, doesn't linger on the 'e' much, either. Think Stehr-way to acoustic heaven and you're on the right track. Similarly, it's hard not to stare at this wonderful example of the bespoke luthier's craft.

But enough bad puns – let's move on to a good guitar, instead.

Visually, the Auditorium is a striking piece of work. That's mainly down to Stehr's use of beautifully figured Oregon Myrtle for the back and sides. It's an increasingly popular tonewood the builder himself describes as, "well-rounded, always reliable and neither too bass-y nor too glassy in the top end; very similar to the best rosewood." There may be a few benighted souls out there who've never experienced the sensual delights of stirring brown sugar into hot porridge. Well... the rich, creamy oatmeal warmth here, streaked with glowing amber swirls, conveys that look to a tee. And even though you can't taste it, you do get to play it.

The top is a sympathetically colour-matched, fine-grained Adirondack spruce and the overall, pale-honey vibe is framed within bindings and veneers of deepest red Macassar ebony that appear shot through with shifting, silken black smoke. The five-piece Walnut laminated neck (denser than mahogany and hence harder to carve) provides the perfect colour-balancing middle-ground between dark and light, while hints of maple and rosewood in the purfling and stylishly understated rosette tie together a beautifully-realised, overall visual aesthetic that Stehr neatly encapsulates as 'fluid'.

An accomplished artist in a variety of media beyond lutherie, Stehr is big on looks. He likes his instruments to stand out from the crowd and it's a tribute to his visual sensibilities that he manages to achieve this without resorting to any form of decorative 'bling'. The Auditorium looks different, for sure, but it's also restrained

and elegant. The most outstanding 'feature' – before we get to the sound – is that watercolour, Rorschach-blot figuring along the back, and while the smear/stripe grain of Oregon Myrtle might not be to everyone's taste, there's no denying it's dramatic. The side panels convey such an illusory ripple-effect that you need a double-take – and then some – to ensure it's not actually inch-deep, 3D wave-patterning. Stehr's determination to let the wood do the talking, in every sense, is reflected in the delightfully undemonstrative leaf headstock logo. It's no specific variety; just a reminder that his guitars were once part of a forest somewhere. He'd never intended the leaf to become a trademark but, having used it on his first guitar (back in 2000) it became one of the main things his growing customer-base insisted on in their order specs. Players wanted the leaf, so the leaf stayed; a reassuring affirmation of universal good taste.

As a largely self-taught luthier whose work pays homage to no obvious school of influence – though he did sign up for the American School of Lutherie in Portland to have master-builder, Charles Fox, help channel his skills in the right direction – Stehr's work is free to reflect his own personality and – as a keen outdoorsman living in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains – he almost can't help looking to nature for inspiration. Maybe that's why he seems capable of capturing and retaining that elusive quality in the finish of his instruments that conveys a sense of the wood still being alive. Just as well then, that the sound the Auditorium delivers so readily reinforces that impression.

Stehr goes for a 13-frets-to-the-body approach here, in the style of the old Nick Lucas Gibson models, more recently taken up by Richard Hoover at Santa Cruz. It's a best of both worlds strategy that allows more access up the neck while moving the bridge that bit closer to the lower bout's "sweet spot", thus delivering the warmer, short-scale sound (plus lower string tension) while retaining power via the 25.4" scale length. The first thing you notice, after the reassuringly substantial (and perfectly comfortably) weight – possibly a result of Stehr incorporating a "double-sides" build to provide structural stability and beef up the tone – is that the bass has a real thump to it; solid and satisfying but in no way overpowering in relation to the upper register.

It's a genuinely lively instrument that rings long and loud; equally responsive to a pick or fingerstyle approach, with its big, strong voice enhanced, from the player's angle, by the ebony-bound sound-port Stehr now incorporates into all his instruments. There's a clean, shimmering brightness to strummed chords all the way down the fretboard and a beautiful, lingering sustain from any note you might care to reach for. The Auditorium really blossoms in DADGAD and dropped-D tunings, seeming to breathe and expand from the belt-loosening relaxing of tension. Individual note separation and clarity here is as pure as the proverbial mountain stream. And briefly, on the 'double-sides' thing, though it's more work for the builder, Stehr sees it as a win-win option; the sturdier rim prevents unwanted movement (and cracking) in later life

"Individual note separation and clarity here is as pure as the proverbial mountain stream"

STEHR AUDITORIUM OREGON MYRTLE

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Stehr Guitars
Model: Auditorium Oregon Myrtle
RRP: £5,650
Body Size: Auditorium, 13 frets to the body
Made In: Rocky Mountains, Washington State, USA
Top: Adirondack spruce
Back and Sides: Oregon Myrtle
Bridge: Rosewood
Bridge Pins: Ebony
Neck: Five-piece walnut laminated
Fingerboard: Macassar ebony
Tuners: Gotoh 510
Nut Width: 1.75"
Scale Length: 25.4"
Onboard Electrics: None
Gig Bag/Case Included: Custom Ameritage case with embroidered Stehr Guitars logo

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Fabulous tone. Pure hand-built class. A real eye-catcher
Cons: Non-traditional looks won't be to everybody's taste
Overall: A beautiful fingerstyle instrument that's just as happy dealing with a pick. Outstanding in every aspect.

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ✪✪✪✪✪
Build Quality: ✪✪✪✪✪
Value for Money: ✪✪✪✪✪
5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor

CONTACT DETAILS

www.stehrguitars.com
www.theacousticmusicco.co.uk

and, while the sides don't actually generate any significant sound, the increased rigidity bounces the energy into the top and back such that they can work together in (literally) closer harmony.

Though it's essentially the support act for such wonderful tone, it's worth pointing out the immaculate detailing overall. The coach-lined fingerboard, headstock and neck-laminates demonstrate exquisite craftsmanship, as do the art deco-ish slot and tile, side-on fret-markers. The headstock veneer (rear-view) and heel cap are both Oregon Myrtle; further contributing – like *The Big Lebowski*'s legendary rug – to the aforementioned visual tie-in. Likewise, the shiny Gotoh 510 tuners offer added luxury as six drops of golden syrup to stir into the aesthetic mix.

Silver or black just wouldn't work here. Even the swollen-bellied bridge is carefully colour-co-ordinated in reddish-brown rosewood.

Joel Stehr describes himself as an intuitive builder in that the necessary science and mathematics are servants to his strictly organic build-process. Every guitar he makes is unique. "I build what feels right to me," Stehr tells *Acoustic*, before adding, "I try to let my instincts guide me towards a finished instrument". And despite 15 years as a luthier, he's yet to make a guitar for himself. He's tried to keep hold of a couple but his customers won't let him. He also admits to having tried also (and in vain) to come up with a cool name for his company. On this evidence, plain old Stehr Guitars works just fine. ■

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12652 - Lakewood D14 Dreadnought Acoustic Guitar
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13386 - Landola D85 Dreadnought Acoustic, Used
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15310 - Martin 00015M Mahogany Acoustic, Used
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6008 - Martin D35 Dreadnought, Natural
5013 - Martin D41 Dreadnought, Natural
7115 - Martin LX1 Little Martin
13581 - Martin SWOMGT Orchestra Shape, Used
15258 - Rainsong NP12 Nylon Parlour Guitar
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11148 - Seagull Excursion Natural Grand SG
11162 - Seagull Maritime SWS Mahogany High-Gloss
10230 - Seagull S6 Original
13291 - Tanglewood TPEFLS
9587 - Tanglewood TSJ XFM Super Jumbo
9570 - Tanglewood TW40 DAN Dreadnought
14943 - Tanglewood TW40 SD VS
13081 - Vintage V2000MGG Acoustic Guitar
13269 - Vintage V400CSB, Cherry Sunburst
10929 - Vintage VE2000DLX Gordon Giltrap
14397 - Vintage VE8000PB Paul Brett 6-String
13272 - Vintage VJ100N XL Jumbo Series, Natural
12437 - Yairi FY84 OM Folk Acoustic Guitar
12428 - Yairi Rag 65 Small Parlour Guitar
5632 - Yamaha F310 Dreadnought, Natural
15358 - Yamaha FG345, Secondhand
6964 - Yamaha FG700S Acoustic Guitar
14483 - Yamaha FS720S Acoustic, Black

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10918 - Breedlove USA Gold D/SRE
13866 - Breedlove Discovery Concert CE, Sunburst
14690 - Breedlove Focus Special Edition Redwood
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14688 - Breedlove Voice Auditorium Small Jumbo
14686 - Breedlove Voice Concert Myrtle
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10320 - Fender CD60CE Mahogany Electro Acoustic
14732 - Fender CJ290SCE Jumbo Maple With Case
15280 - Fender PM1 Deluxe, Vintage Sunburst
15355 - Fender PM3 Dlx Triple-0 Vintage Sunburst
14744 - Fender Sonoran SCE Left-Hand Dreadnought
14745 - Fender Sonoran SCE Thinline, Black
9700 - Gibson J45 Custom Electro Acoustic
15380 - Gibson Songwriter Deluxe, Secondhand
15087 - James Neligan DEVPFI Parlour Guitar Used
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4554 - Jimmy Moon PF0003 Electro, Pau Ferro B&S
6948 - Jimmy Moon RD3, Electro, Natural

6 String Electro Acoustics

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12793 - Maestro Rosetta MRDT Dreadnought Electro
13212 - Maestro Singa Flame Maple Custom Electro
14814 - Maestro Singa M-CSB-C All Solid MedJumbo
13712 - Maestro Singa MR-CSB A Custom Jumbo
13209 - Maestro Singa MRDT Medium Jumbo Electro
13711 - Maestro Singa O-CSB Custom Medium Jumbo
14815 - Maestro Singa WE-CSB-A Medium Jumbo
13718 - Maestro Victoria with fitted LR Baggs
13207 - Maestro Victoria with fitted LR Baggs
12222 - Martin & Co DX1AE Electro Acoustic
15164 - Martin 000RS1
14479 - Martin 000RSGT Electro Acoustic Guitar
8277 - Martin DC15ME Dreadnought Cutaway
14780 - Martin DJR Dreadnought Junior
14477 - Martin DRS2 Electro Acoustic Guitar
14478 - Martin DRSGT Electro Acoustic Guitar
14528 - Martin HD28 with Fishman, Secondhand,
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12438 - Northwood Custom Myrtle 80 Series D-nought
15443 - Ovation Adamas W597 USA, Secondhand
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9819 - Rainsong CO-OM1000N2
9818 - Rainsong CO-WS1000N2
9815 - Rainsong JM1000 Graphite Guitar
4812 - RainSong OM1000N2 Electro Acousti
10082 - RainSong P12 Parlor
10088 - RainSong P14 Parlor
9824 - Rainsong S-DR1000N2 Dreadnought Studio
9827 - RainSong SG Shorty Gloss Shorty Series
7974 - Rainsong WS1000N2 Graphite Guitar
15259 - Rainsong SMCX Smokey Series
15257 - Rainsong SMH Smokey Hybrid
5257 - Satori YD18EQ, Dreadnought Electro, Nat
8234 - Satori YD42EQ Electro Acoustic, Vint Nat
5255 - Satori YO28HEQ, OM Electro, Natural
15077 - Takamine EF407 Electro Acoustic, Used
14251 - Takamine EF508KC NEX Cutaway Electro
15359 - Takamine EG540SC Electro Acoustic, Used
12236 - Takamine EN20C Electro Acoustic
14253 - Takamine GD30CE Electro Acoustic, Nat
14257 - Takamine GF30CE Brown Sunburst
14261 - Takamine GY93E New Yorker Electro
14249 - Takamine P1DC Electro Acoustic Guitar
13295 - Tanglewood TPESFCEZS Electro Acoustic
14952 - Tanglewood TSF CE Black
14950 - Tanglewood Evolution IV TSF CE Red
14954 - Tanglewood EvolutionTSFCE Sunburst Gloss
14951 - Tanglewood TSF CE White
13480 - Tanglewood TVC Koa Electro Acoustic
13459 - Tanglewood TW115 SSCE
4187 - Tanglewood TW40 OANE Orchestra
14947 - Tanglewood TWCR OE Crossroads
13485 - Taylor 515CE Electro Acoustic, Used
12571 - Taylor 814CE Electro Acoustic, Used
14419 - Vintage Pilgrim VPG900 Mayflower Deluxe
8007 - Vintage Gordon Giltrap Signature
13399 - Vintage VECJ100 Jumbo Acoustic Black
13233 - Yamaha AC3M Electro Acoustic, Secondhand
14427 - Yamaha APX1000 Slimline Guitar, Natural
14434 - Yamaha APX700 II Thinline, Natural
14492 - Yamaha CPX1000 Electro Acoustic, Natural
6961 - Yamaha CPX700 Electro Acoustic Sandburst
9304 - Yamaha CPX900 Brown Sunburst
14422 - Yamaha FGX720SC, Natural
14421 - Yamaha FJX720SC Electro, Sunburst
14420 - Yamaha FX310A Guitar, Natural
6966 - Yamaha FX370C Dreadnought Electro, Black
6965 - Yamaha FX370C Electro Acoustic, Natural
8141 - Yamaha SLG110S Silent Steel String Guitar
14418 - Yamaha SLG110S Silent Steel String Guitar
14522 - Yamaha SLG200S Silent Guitar, Steel

Classical Guitars

15241 - Admira A15 Classical Guitar
15240 - Admira A20 Classical Handcrafted Guitar
14922 - Admira Alba 4/4 Full Size Classical
13025 - Admira Malaga Classical Guitar, USED
8590 - Azahar Model 31A Classical Guitar
7365 - Jose Ferrer 3/4 Size Classical, Used
8507 - Mendieta Conservatoire C Classical
5360 - Ramirez 130 Year Aniversary Classical
6029 - Ramirez 1NE Classical Guitar
15239 - Ramirez 2NCWE Classical Guitar
15236 - Ramirez 4NE Classical Guitar
5644 - Ramirez George Harrison Model Classical
6336 - Ramirez R2 Classical Guitar
15237 - Ramirez RA Classical Guitar
15238 - Ramirez RB Classical Guitar
6027 - Ramirez S1 Classical Guitar
12761 - Ramirez SP Classical Guitar
6441 - Roberto C2 Classical Guitar
14942 - Tanglewood DBT12 3/4 Classical Guitar
9483 - Tanglewood DBT34 3/4 Classical Guitar
10999 - Westcoast Student 4/4 Classical, Red
14720 - Yamaha C40II Full Size Classical Guitar
14721 - Yamaha CX40 Mark II Electro-Classical

12 Strings

13865 - Breedlove Pursuit 12 String Acoustic
13553 - Eko Vintage Ranger 12 in Black
14525 - Guild JF230-AB USA-Made c1997
10991 - Tanglewood TRD12 Lefty . Nat
13475 - Tanglewood TW145 12 SS CE
14398 - Vintage VE2000GG12 Giltrap 12-String
14349 - Vintage VE8000PB-12 Paul Brett

Mandolin Family

8826 - Ashbury AM-325 Octave Mandola
15437 - Ashbury Celtic Octave Mandola
15442 - Ashbury Rathlin Irish Bouzouki
13527 - Blue Moon BB15 Bouzouki GR33001
15435 - Blue Moon Irish Bouzouki, Pear Shape
14028 - Breedlove Crossover OO O Hole Mandolin,
14500 - Breedlove Crossover Mandolin, VV
12568 - Fender Concert Tone "F" 63S Mandolin
14740 - Fender Concert Tone Mandolin "A" 52E
14741 - Fender Concert Tone Mandolin "A" 53S
9240 - Jimmy Moon A2 Acoustic Mandolin, Natural
4564 - Jimmy Moon A Plus Electro Bouzouki, Nat
4563 - Jimmy Moon Octave Mandolin (Mandola) Nat
4553 - Jimmy Moon Standard Mandolin
9430 - Ozark Flat Back Bouzouki
8315 - Westcoast M20 Mandolin Sunburst
12347 - Westcoast M20S Mandolin Sunburst

Acoustic Amplification

0000 - AER - 14 Models in Stock
11205 - Acus One 5 Protective Bag
13905 - Blackstar ID Core BEAM Bluetooth Amp
10496 - Fender Acoustasonic 15 Acoustic Amp
8166 - Fender Acoustasonic 150 Acoustic Combo
9166 - Loudbox Artist
4548 - Fishman Loudbox Mini - 60W, 1x6.5"
5286 - Fishman SA220 - 220w, 6x4"
13282 - Markbass AC101 Acoustic Combo
6770 - Marshall AS100D - 50W+50W, 2x8"
13956 - Marshall AS50D - 50W, 2x8"
15059 - Marshall AS50D RED - 50W, 2x8"
4976 - Roland AC33 30W - 1x5"
9358 - Roland AC33, Rosewood
11129 - Roland AC40 Acoustic Guitar Amplifier
6505 - Roland AC60 Acoustic Amp - 30w, 2x6.5
9383 - Roland AC60 Acoustic Guitar Combo, RW
5597 - Roland AC90 - 90W, 2x8"
5574 - Roland Cube Street 2.5+2.5W, 6.5
14371 - MOBILE AC Acoustic Chorus, Portable Amp
13018 - Tanglewood T3 30W Acoustic Amplifier
8108 - Tanglewood T6, 60W
14941 - Tanglewood TBA5 5 Watt Acoustic Amp
13471 - Tanglewood TXS Bass Sub
10937 - Yamaha THR5A Acoustic Amp

Ukuleles

12564 - Barnes & Mullins BJ306 6-String Banjo
4371 - Barnes & Mullins UBJ1 Banjo Ukulele
14820 - Baton Rouge Tenor Uke Cutaway, LEFTY
15147 - Blue Moon Tenor Ukulele Pear-Shaped
15398 - Deering Goodtime Tenor Banjo Ukulele
14557 - Deering Goodtime Ukulele Banjo
9081 - Fender Mino' Aka Concert Ukulele
12800 - Kala KA-BNJ/BK-C Concert Banjo Ukulele
9345 - Kala U Bass Electro Ac In Solid Mahogany
8127 - Kala U Bass in Mahogany
4722 - Kala U-Bass 2 Electro Acoustic Ukulele
15458 - Kamaka HP1 Genuine Hawaiin Pineapple
13978 - Laka Concert Ukulele with GigBag
13979 - Laka Soprano Ukulele with Case
10372 - Magic Fluke M10 Concert Ukulele, Natural
13883 - Magic Fluke M30 Flea Sop Uke, Mahogany
15394 - Magic Fluke M90W Firefly Walnut BanjoUke
14866 - Magic Fluke Timber Elec. Bass, Fretless
8128 - Martin S1 Ukulele
15457 - Mya-Moe USA Beansprout Banjo Uke, Used
13679 - Nukulele "Abbots Digit" Bottle Ukulele
13684 - Nukulele Autumn Gold Bottle Ukulele
13680 - Nukulele "Brown Ale" Bottle Ukulele
13681 - Nukulele "Helles Bier" Bottle Ukulele
13683 - Nukulele Lemonade Bottle Ukulele
13682 - Nukulele Slainte Bottle Ukulele
8515 - Ohana BK20 Baritone Ukulele
12610 - Ohana BK22 Baritone Ukulele
12609 - Ohana BKB35E Bass Ukulele
13633 - Ohana CK15BK Concert Ukulele, Black
13634 - Ohana CK15BL Concert Ukulele, Blue
12605 - Ohana CK15Z Concert Ukulele
8513 - Ohana CK50MG Concert Ukulele
8508 - Ohana PK10S Soprano Ukulele Pineapple
8516 - Ohana PK25G Soprano Ukulele Pineapple
13637 - Ohana SK10GN Soprano Uke, Matte Green
4712 - Ohana SK10S Soprano Ukulele
13636 - Ohana SK10YW Soprano Uke, Matte Yellow
13644 - Ohana SK12 Soprano Ukulele
4711 - Ohana SK20S Soprano Ukulele Uke
14210 - Ohana SK21M Premium Mahogany Sopranino
13626 - Ohana SK22 Soprano Ukulele
8517 - Ohana SK22Z Sop Ukulele Zebrawood B&S
13642 - Ohana SK23 Soprano Ukulele
4710 - Ohana SK25 Soprano Ukulele
14211 - Ohana SK70BA Spruce & Morinda Sop Uke
14508 - Ohana SK70L Soprano Ukulele
14212 - Ohana SK70WG Soprano Uke, Willow B & S
12390 - Ohana Soprano Uke Gig Bag
13311 - Ohana Concert Uke Gig Bag
13312 - Ohana Tenor Uke Gig Bag
13310 - Ohana Baritone Uke Gig Bag
5009 - Ozark Ukulele Banjo
12740 - ResoVille Weeki Wachee Resonator Ukulele
10384 - Risa Electric Soprano Ukulele, UKS363MP
10385 - Risa UKS385MP Solid Concert Electro Uke
10424 - Uluru Lehua I Soprano Ukulele
15385 - Vintage Banjo Ukulele, Used
12376 - Yamaha GL1 Guitalele

Travel & Tenor Guitars

15344 - Faith Nomad Mini Neptune
15345 - Faith Nomad Mini Saturn
14473 - Luna Safari Henna 3/4 Size Travel Guitar
14472 - Luna Safari Starry Night 3/4 Travel Guitar
15432 - Luna Safari Tattoo
5835 - Martin Backpacker Acoustic Travel Guitar
13324 - Martin LX Red Little Martin
7115 - Martin LX1 Little Martin
7320 - Martin LX1E, Electro Travel Guitar
15439 - Martin LXK2 Little Martin Travel Guitar
9588 - Tanglewood TW15 Baby All Solid Travel
14522 - Yamaha SLG200S Silent Guitar, Steel
8846 - Ashbury AT-14 Tenor Guitar
8851 - Ashbury AT24 Tenor Guitar
15434 - Ashbury Tenor Guitar, Flamed Oak
7121 - Gitane Cigano GJ-0, Oval Hole, Natural
7122 - Gitane D500 Gypsy Jazz, Natural GR52066
7216 - Gitane DG255 Gypsy Jazz Guitar in Nat
9805 - Gitane DG300 Gypsy Jazz Guitar In Nat
14912 - Gitane Gitane Reinhardt Guitar
7120 - Gitane Cigano GJ5 Gypsy Jazz, Natural
9299 - Peerless Martin Taylor Maestro
14615 - Dobro, circa 1975, Original Vintage
12613 - Fender FR50CE Cutaway Electro Resonator
14530 - Gibson Dobro USA Made Resonator, Used
12737 - ResoVille Parkville MS12 Single Cone Nic
12730 - ResoVille Burbank MT12 Tri-Cone, Nickel

For full guitar details, pricing and photos, enter the number next to each guitar model into our SKU search facility on the website.

AUDEN EMILY ROSE

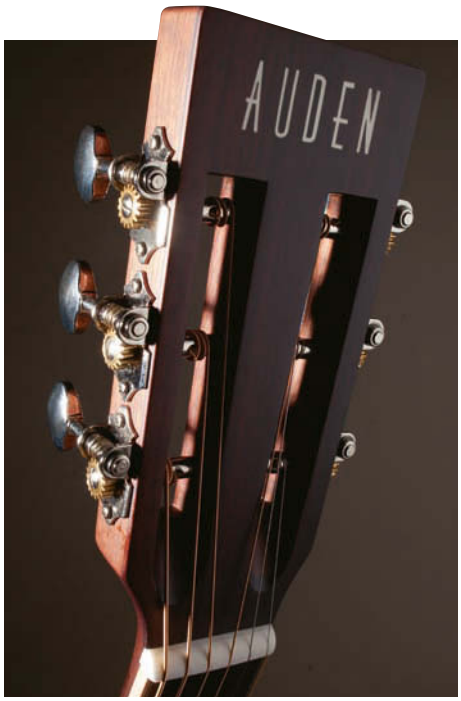
Auden's extensive range of acoustics now offers a parlour with onboard electronics. We run the rule over a guitar that combines tradition with tech

WORDS: OLLIE MCGHIE **IMAGES:** RICHARD ECCLESTONE

Parlour guitars are often described as being an instrument of choice. Let me clarify this further. You don't really go out to buy one specifically in mind unless you've heard one previously. You may associate them with the 19th century parlour room**,** and more recently with Commander Chris Hadfield playing a cover of David Bowie's 'Space Oddity' on the International Space Station. But beyond their domestic and intergalactic charm, parlours seem to live much more sedate lives, quite distant from their larger body-sized counterparts. They certainly can't match them in volume, neither can they produce the full dynamic range of bass to treble, but what they can do is turn the player-instrument bond into an introspective and personal experience. Auden Guitars retain this quality but extends it to the larger audience through clever use of projection, build and potential for amplification.

In previous outings, Auden's review samples have been described in *Acoustic* as having excellent build quality and very impressive quality control. So taking delivery of this Emily Rose model, my expectations are high. One of the first things I notice before plucking a string is the weight. This parlour seems enviably light compared to other instruments I've played and tips the scales at just two kilos. The addition of a strap button and metal pin at the base (which doubles up as a jack input) means that this instrument could have potential for some serious gig time.

The Emily Rose has a slotted headstock, mahogany back and sides with a mahogany neck, a slightly shorter nut width at 44mm, 12 frets to the neck (18 in total) and an ebony bridge and composite saddle, finished with a honeyburst cedar top. It doesn't light the same flame as the original vintage sunburst of the Gibson Les Paul or Fender Stratocaster, but its graduation in colour, from an autumnal amber on the bridge across the whole of the soundboard to a similar mahogany hue of the back and sides, is testament to the subtlety of the overall design. The cedar top, a wood traditionally more commonly found on classical guitars, has a soft, pleasing pixelated grain.



"It's a refined, elegant musical machine that wouldn't look out of place in a smoky blues den or on a concert stage"

The Emily Rose has an understated matt finish too, delivered by a PU satin seal. The edges of the body are decorated with a fine solid maple binding, which also lines the soundhole rosette. The effect of this against the warm mahogany is that of a refined, elegant musical machine that wouldn't look out of place either in a smoky blues den, or on the traditional concert stage.

The body, which measures from 90mm at the shoulder to 110mm at the bout, certainly has the potential to produce some volume. Combined with light, clean tones in the upper register, the sound has superb projection as well as providing amazing clarity, something that I wasn't expecting with the cedar top. The notes are so clean that it almost seems a crime to experiment with any kind of strumming.

The low action set-up, however, makes a slight buzz on the B string, so strumming is definitely out for the time being, but the Auden does come with an Allen key for fine tuning (as well as a buffing cloth, pick guard and spare bone bridge saddle). Auden's Doug Sparkes told *Acoustic*: "Every Auden comes with an invitation to bring it to the workshop at any time to have it set up exactly as you want." In the meantime I limit myself predominantly to fingerstyle playing across a variety of musical genres, something parlour guitars lend themselves naturally to; sitting neatly between the classical and the steel strung instruments versatile enough to play standard repertoire from both instruments and beyond.

For the best part, the right arm and hand has a fast transition from the bridge to the 12th fret, making light work of the change of tone and pace needed for repetitive musical passages. The left hand on the ebony fingerboard, decorated with mother of pearl marker spots, has an easy time too, especially with the D'Addario light strings.

Taking the instrument through its paces yields good results: the bass fares well in the blues and the upper range complements classical repertoire with relative ease. With some vibrato thrown in for good measure there is sustain and zing that comes across well when amplified with the Schertler EQ. The more I played the Auden the more I was drawn to the evenness of tone. If I

"Attention has been given to the craftsmanship, which is crisp, and the tone, which is supremely pure"

AUDEN EMILY ROSE

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Auden
Model: Emily Rose (Neo+)
RRP: £999
Body Size: Parlour
Made In: China
Top: Cedar AAA
Back and Sides: Mahogany
Bridge: Ebony
Neck: Mahogany
Fingerboard: Ebony
Frets: 18
Tuners: Schertler
Nut Width: 44mm
Scale Length: 630mm
Onboard Electrics: Schertler Lydia EQ
Strings Fitted: D'Addario EXP16s 12-53
Gig Bag/Case Included: Hard case

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: An elegant build; versatile even tone; good projection
Cons: A little expensive; buzz-inducing low action (though correctable)
Overall: The vintage finish and easy playability could turn this into a classic for the aspiring musician

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ✪✪✪✪◐
Build Quality: ✪✪✪✪✪
Value for Money: ✪✪✪✪○

5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor

CONTACT DETAILS

www.audenguitars.com

wanted to give the bass more, it responded. If I wanted to project at the top, it responded similarly. In the midrange it didn't wow as resolutely, though it still performs well above par while maintaining clarity and precision.

Providing the perfect accompaniment to this sound, the Schertler Lydia EQ does a wonderful job of maintaining the clarity of the notes. Three dials give you control of the volume, bass and treble, which are easy to adjust – and I believe would work very well on stage, given the discreet location of them tucked away in the soundhole. The internal controls add to the overall smooth aesthetic of the instrument too.

Comparing this instrument to a Tanglewood Sundance Parlour, which uses the same materials on the front, back and sides, you notice that the Emily Rose has a warmth of tone which exudes throughout the sonic range. Where a full bodied mahogany back and sides instrument has an insular, contained sound, the cedar top of the Auden certainly releases some of the higher resonance, giving it a greater dynamic range of tone.

This is an extremely tidy, smartly presented instrument with a design, which suggests that playing jazz and blues would be appropriate, but also has the ability to take some classical repertoire. It certainly becomes obvious after much playing of the guitar that plenty of care and attention has been given to the craftsmanship, which is crisp, and the tone, which is supremely pure.

With a retail price of £999 the Emily Rose is entering a competitive market, but for those after a gig-ready parlour, we highly recommend giving it a try. ■

JAMES NELIGAN MODEL
LYNE SERIES · EUROPEAN DESIGN
Lyne
2014

PLAY FROM THE SOUL

In the whiskey distilling process, the "lyne arm" allows vapour to be converted into real spirit. That's the aim of the Lyne series of JN guitars; transforming what you have in your mind into real music!

All Lyne models feature a distinguished design, traditionally constructed with a gorgeous Engelmann solid spruce top and satin finish neck.

Combined with a rosewood back and sides, these guitars give an authentic sound to your soul!

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ASHDOWN B-SOCIAL AMPLIFIER

Working in tandem with your smartphone and computer, the B-Social takes compact, portable amps to new heights. Robbie Gladwell switches on his phone's Bluetooth…

WORDS: ROBBIE GLADWELL

Wouldn't it be great if you had a device that could allow a musician the sort of connectivity and range of functions that a smart phone delivers? Well, Ashdown Engineering has come up with a compact, stereo, multi-function amplifier that has pushed the barriers for bass, electric and acoustic players in the same way that Apple did with their iPhone!

This may sound a grandiose claim but, unless I'm very much mistaken, this is the first wholly portable amplifier that I've come across that allows you access to such an amazing range of options – and it looks great too!

The clue is sort of in the name: the B-Social. How many of you have had a mate round for a jam where after a few drinks you'd plug both into an amp and play along together? More often than not your practice amp has only one input and unless they've bought their own amps along to the party the story ends there!

This reviewer is old enough to remember the days when most amps had at least two channels, which allowed you to do this. The only drawback was the size of the amps back then and the fact that they were mainly voiced for the electric guitar. Fast forward a few years and you can now choose from a a great range of little amps with built-in effects, but still with only one input and, you guessed it – still voiced for the electric guitarist!

The B-Social goes much, much further than adding just another input. This amp is multi-voiced for bass, acoustic guitar, electric violin and yes, the electric guitar. And that's not all. It also acts as a portable Bluetooth stereo system (with cabinet compensation – a form of EQ), which sounds every bit as good as the expensive portable hi-fi units that most people use nowadays instead of the old style larger component systems of yesteryear.

Also, you can connect it via a mini USB 2 socket to your Mac or PC to act as an external soundcard for recording those jam sessions, or

for use with DAW software and multi-track recording. The stereo output features a button to enable latency-free monitoring when using it in conjunction with recording software, too.

With regard to the B-Social's onboard recording facilities, Ashdown told us, "Starting with the instrument inputs, channel one flows through from either the input jack sockets or from the built-in wireless receiver. In both cases the raw signal from the instrument is passed directly to the left channel of the stereo codec and therefore into the computer attached to the B-Social, unless you are using the AppTek, [described in detail later in this review] in which case the effected signal will be used. Similarly, channel two jack input is passed directly to the right channel of the codec, once again the signal is in the raw state."

It therefore follows that any controls on the B-Social such as Gain and the EQ will not affect the recorded sound, and all the level settings will be performed by the software you are using independent of the B-Social.

Any sound you have recorded, or are monitoring, can be accessed independently via the return from the codec. In this case the L and R outputs are internally summed and passed through the audio channel, the input gains on the instrument channels should be set to zero to do this. With this in mind, the B-Social's features show how powerful this amp is when used as a 'simple' soundcard.

With regard to the power amp section and the controls; the B-Social delivers 75 watts RMS power into two custom designed 5" full range loudspeakers (35-watt per channel). These speakers have dual cones featuring parasitic tweeters.

On top of this little amplifier you will find the three-band EQ for the instrument section and a separate three-band EQ and output level controls for the stereo audio. The two instrument channels have separate passive and active input jacks, which is handy if you're using it in conjunction with an active bass, or an acoustic guitar/bass with a built-in preamp.

The majority of the in/out sockets are found on the side of the B-Social. It has four 6.5mm instrument input jacks, plus a 3.5mm stereo input and line out jacks. As mentioned previously, it also has a micro USB socket here too. If you want to use it as a practice amp you can plug a pair of headphones via the mini 3.5mm jack socket. It has a speaker mute switch for headphone monitoring and practice purposes.

On the back panel you'll find the mains socket and combined power switch and two power amp output sockets for extension 4 Ohm speakers, so you can use it with either larger hi-fi speakers, a bass cab or a guitar cab. This means that the B-Social can be used as an amp head for rehearsals or small gigs.

The B-Social doesn't have built-in effects; instead, it has something called the AppTek socket (found on the side panel). By using the Amp Kit app, (available on iOS for Apple products and Android for other smartphones and tablets) you have access to an amazing range of amplifiers and effects modelling – including Ashdown's ABM Pre app.

The B-Social has Bluetooth 4.0 connectivity for playing backing tracks and streaming stereo hi-fi. One of the best features is that it comes with a plug-and-play transmitter that allows the player to connect wirelessly to the amp without using a guitar lead. The transmitter includes an additional 'mic in' mini jack socket with an edge mounted volume control. The transmitter has rechargeable batteries that can be charged via the micro USB socket (cable is included). This is obviously a very useful feature too.

I downloaded the Amp kit app and paid the full $39USD for the complete collection of amps, pedals and effects. From my point of view as a player, teacher and studio musician, this brought the whole little amp to life, with great amp sims and lush reverbs and delays. To use the AppTek, you simply plug one end of the supplied four-pole lead into the AppTek socket, and the other into your smart phone or tablet. You then select the amps and effects from the Amp Kit menu and control their parameters directly with your device.

The sounds are great. I've been using the B-Social at home for learning new material and recording demos, as well as in my studio for teaching and more serious recording projects. I absolutely love the flexibility that it offers. It's a portable Bluetooth hi-fi one minute, a soundcard for my laptop the next and finally, a great little amp for a couple of players (with the additional benefit of backing tracks should you wish) to jam through!

My only criticism is that I'd like to see an optional front panel that had a cloth front to protect the speakers.

The B-Social is available in three high gloss finishes: natural wood, black and white, and we'd recommend a test drive soon. Once you've had opportunity to explore all that it can do, you might just wonder how you managed before. ■

ASHDOWN B-SOCIAL AMPLIFIER

NEED TO KNOW

RRP: £599
Power Output: 35 Watts x2
Power Requirement: 115-230v
Speaker Configuration: 2x5
Frequency Response: 60Hz-20kHz
Instrument Input: High x2, Low x2
Line Input: 10k Ohms Level 0dBu
Line Output Impedance: 4.7k Ohms / Level 0dBu
Impedance: 4 Ohm min per side
Bass: +/-15dB @ 100Hz
Middle: +/-15dB @ 660Hz
Treble: +/-15dB @ 7kHz
Measurements: H x W x D (mm) 255 (inc feet and handles) x 370 x 205
Weight (kg): 7.6kg

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Superb range of features and technology, multi-functional applications; attractive RRP
Cons: Could possibly take some a while to get to grips with everything on offer
Overall: A ground-breaking, totally portable and compact, well-built unit jam-packed with features and tech for whole host of uses

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ✪✪✪✪✪
Build Quality: ✪✪✪✪✪
Value for Money: ✪✪✪✪✪
5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor

CONTACT DETAILS

www.ashdownmusic.com

FAITH SIGNATURE VENUS BEARCLAW SITKA CLARO WALNUT

Faith Guitars' limited run of 'Signature' guitars continues with a hybrid electro. Steve Harvey gets an exclusive first look

WORDS: STEVE HARVEY **IMAGES:** RICHARD ECCLESTONE

Owned by Barnes & Mullins, one of the UK's largest and most respected distributors of guitars, Faith Guitars has an extensive and widely available range of acoustics and electros on offer. The bread and butter of their range includes first-upgrade and mid-range instruments, and very good they are too. However, on an increasingly regular basis, Faith Guitars releases special models under the 'Signature' header. These one-offs or limited runs of instruments are built from rare and exotic tonewoods hand-picked by the 'signature' in question, Patrick James Eggle. Readers of this magazine will be aware of Eggle's own range of high-end guitars, but Faith's PJE Signature series is an altogether different proposition. Showing that Faith Guitars is much more than a high-volume producer of mid-range instruments, the Signature series gives evidence of a more discerning side to the range. And, at the same time, provides us here at *Acoustic* Towers a steady stream of sought-after guitars to drool over.

A few issues ago we were impressed with an earlier Faith Signature: a one-off, all-claro walnut parlour. Our review model here can be viewed as a sibling of the parlour as its back and sides are also made from claro walnut. It is, in fact, from the same log as the aforementioned parlour. The walnut log was hand-selected by Patrick Eggle as part of his annual sortie to California for the NAMM show.

Our review model's body shape is the Venus, which, in terms of its dimensions, is essentially the love-child of an OM and Auditorium models. As with all Faith Venus models, this guitar offers a sweeping cutaway.

Upon opening the Faith-branded, four-clasp (one lockable) case, the eye is drawn to the 'imperfections' of the spruce top, hence

the word 'bearclaw' in the guitar's name. Of course, the curly 'flaws' are not the result of an actual bear having clawed at the tree at some point during its life, but are the result of where the tree has healed itself as it's grown. There's a lot of speculation about bearclaw guitars and whether they are, in fact, tonally superior to a standard spruce topped guitar.

In truth, it's virtually impossible to prove either way. What we do know is that bearclaw figuring is generally more common in older, slow-growing trees and so the wood can be stiffer, but not always.

From an aesthetic point of view, bearclaw guitars divide opinion. Some will be put off by what they see as blemishes and the fact that the soundboard's grain is not ruler-straight. Others will be drawn to the unique and distinct appearance. In truth, it's all subjective. What the bearclaw does do, however, is highlight the way the master-grade Engelmann spruce has been superbly bookmatched and that alone makes for a striking first impression.

As with the Signature parlour we reviewed recently, the claro walnut has a beautiful and highly figured grain, and offers a deep 'milk-chocolate' hue. In terms of its tonal performance, claro walnut is similar in density and grain structure to Hawaiian koa and yields a timbre that falls somewhere between the deep warmth of rosewood and the clear brightness of mahogany. The guitar's body is bound with flame maple, both top and bottom. The same binding wood has been used as a centre strip between the two-piece back and at the base of the guitar where the input jack is located. On the soundboard, the flame maple binding is augmented with flawless twin coachlining. A simple but stylish abalone soundhole rosette completes the adornments on what is a classically pretty guitar. The material selection remains high for the remaining parts of the guitar. The fingerboard, bridge, heel cap and headstock face are all made from Macassan figured ebony, the neck is mahogany, and the saddle, nut, bridge pins and machinehead buttons are all bone. From top to bottom, side to side, this Faith Signature model is a wood-lover's delight, with top-notch tonewood choices at every turn. Perhaps because of this, this reviewer would have preferred to see a slightly thinner gloss finish. The finish itself is beautifully executed, but with all that stunning wood on offer, maybe a 'less is more' approach to the glossing would have been more fitting? That said, maybe it's better that such highly prized tonewoods are well protected.

Not all Faith Signature models come loaded with onboard electrics, but Faith's Venus body shape offers a great balance between

> **"Bearclaw figuring is more common in older, slow-growing trees and so the wood can be stiffer"**

FAITH SIGNATURE VENUS BEARCLAW SITKA CLARO WALNUT

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Faith Guitars
Model: Signature Venus Bearclaw Sitka Claro Walnut
RRP: £1,699
Body Size: OM/Auditorium
Made In: Designed in UK, made in Indonesia
Top: Solid bearclaw spruce (American wood hand selected by Patrick James Eggle)
Back and Sides: Solid claro walnut
Bridge: Macassan figured ebony
Neck: Mahogany
Fingerboard: Macassan figured
Frets: 20
Tuners: Grover 18:1 Nickel with bone buttons
Nut Width: 45mm / string spacing 55mm
Scale Length: 645mm
Onboard Electrics: LR Baggs Element
Strings Fitted: D'Addario Elixir 12 gauge
Gig Bag/Case Included: Yes

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Beautifully built, visually striking and fantastic tone – both acoustically and amplified
Cons: Gloss finish might be a little thick for some tastes, lack of dynamic range on tone control
Overall: Stunning tonewoods, remarkable tone, and eye-catching good looks. Perhaps one of the best all-rounders we've reviewed for some time.

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ✪✪✪✪◐
Build Quality: ✪✪✪✪✪
Value for Money: ✪✪✪✪✪
5 Stars: Superb, almost faultless
4 Stars: Excellent, hard to beat
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor

CONTACT DETAILS

www.faithguitars.com

a couch-guitar and one that can be taken onstage. As such, this Venus bearclaw is fitted with the LR Baggs Element, which features an undersaddle transducer and a Class A preamp endpin jack with pre-contoured EQ. Volume and Tone rotaries are discreetly mounted on the inside of the soundhole, meaning the guitar's body hasn't been disturbed to accommodate a control panel. As a side point, the Element system is well-suited to retro fitting. The battery is housed within a mesh bag, which, along with the panel holding the two rotaries, is fitted to the inside of the guitar using only adhesive pads meaning no drilling necessary should you be looking to fit the system to an existing purchase.

Before plugging the Venus in, however, a few words on its acoustic performance. First strums of open position chords offer a full, bright tone, which, to this reviewer's ear, is closer to a mahogany-backed guitar than a rosewood one. Sonically, the mids are proud and prominent, and supported by a plump, round bass. Moving on to single note runs and choppy riffs, it's noticeable that the Venus Bearclaw offers a strong, dry punch. Each note has a zingy sparkle to the front end, followed by a woody overtone. The guitar's set-up is particularly good, which, when added to the ultra-clear single note production, means this guitar is particularly adept at handling solos.

When playing some basic fingerstyle, the guitar's low end capabilities come to the fore. Such is the responsiveness and separation that we were able to coax out a range of expression and dynamics from the bass strings. In practice, this makes fingerstyle less taxing for the thumb.

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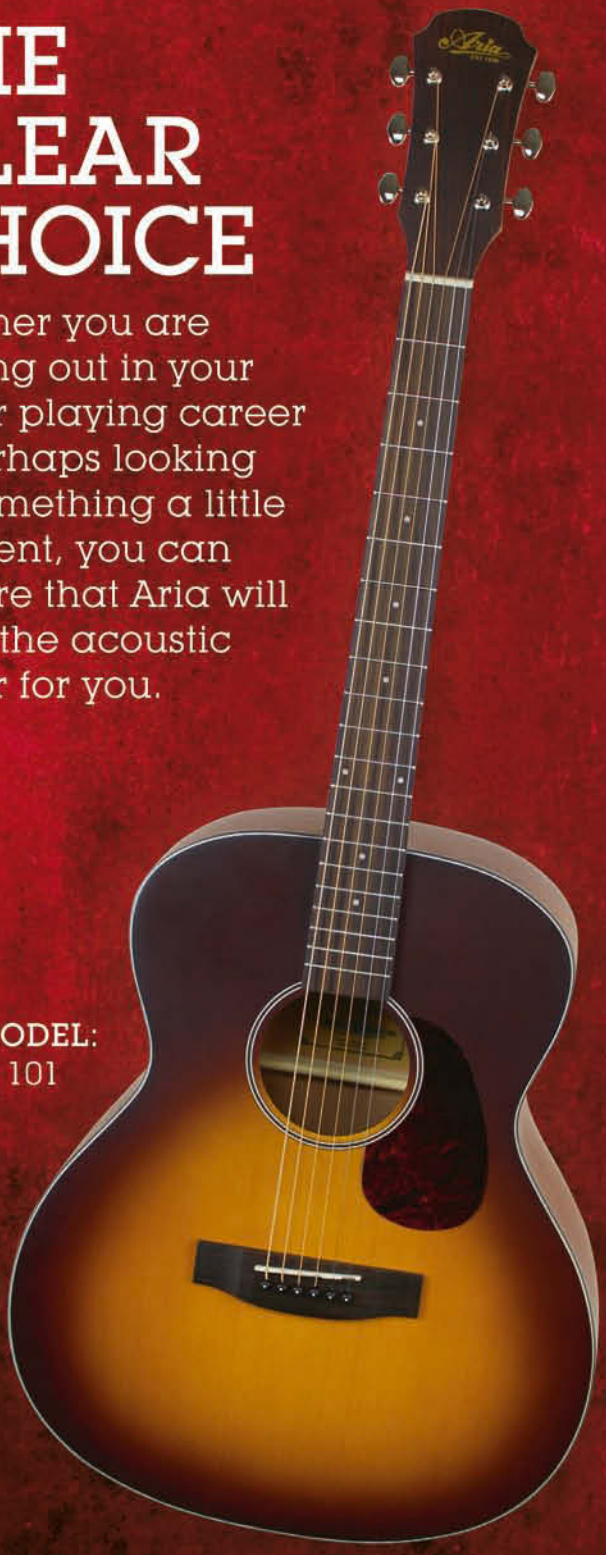

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"It's as capable and rewarding played quietly at home as it is onstage in either a solo or band setting"

Overall, it is hard not to be impressed with the way the Venus Bearclaw performs acoustically. Across the board, in varying settings and styles, the guitar plays superbly – both physically and tonally. I can honestly say that at no time did I think to myself, "I wish this guitar had more X," or "It's great, but it needs a little Y."

Time then to plug in and we do so by using our house Schertler David (with EQ controls set flat). The Schertler is known for being able to accurately produce (not reproduce) the natural sound of the guitar in question, so any variances are most likely to stem from the onboard electrics. To that end, the LR Baggs does a great job. The sound coming through the amp was the same as the sound of the guitar, only louder, which in itself is no mean achievement. The brightness of the midrange becomes even more prominent when the guitar is amplified and we'd suggest this guitar would cut through a full band scenario with ease.

We found it takes a little while to become accustomed to the rotaries, not just because of where they are located, but also because only half of the wheel protrudes. This means that it's not possible to go from full off to full on within a single swipe. It takes two or three goes at it, which could prove to be a pain onstage.

It's useful that the Tone control rotary is centre-indented, as it helps give a sense of orientation for where you are on the clock face. However, although the sound the LR Baggs system produced was excellent, we found the tone control was lacking in terms of its range. The difference between full-on and full-off was slight at best and, bearing in mind the quality of the guitar it's fitted to, somewhat disappointing. The saving grace is that the system is so good. You're very unlikely to want to fiddle with the tone control, but it's a notable (albeit minor) weakness in what is otherwise a very impressive preamp fitted to a desirable instrument.

In some ways, the Faith Venus is something of an all-rounder. The OM/Auditorium body shape makes for an excellent middle ground between an out and out fingerstyle guitar, and a good old fashioned strummer. It's as capable and rewarding played quietly at home as it is onstage in either a solo or band setting. It has enough embellishments and character to be eye-catching, yet sufficiently simple and understated to remain classy. If you think this guitar could be your next new guitar, we'd recommend moving quickly – our review model is one of only two made! ■

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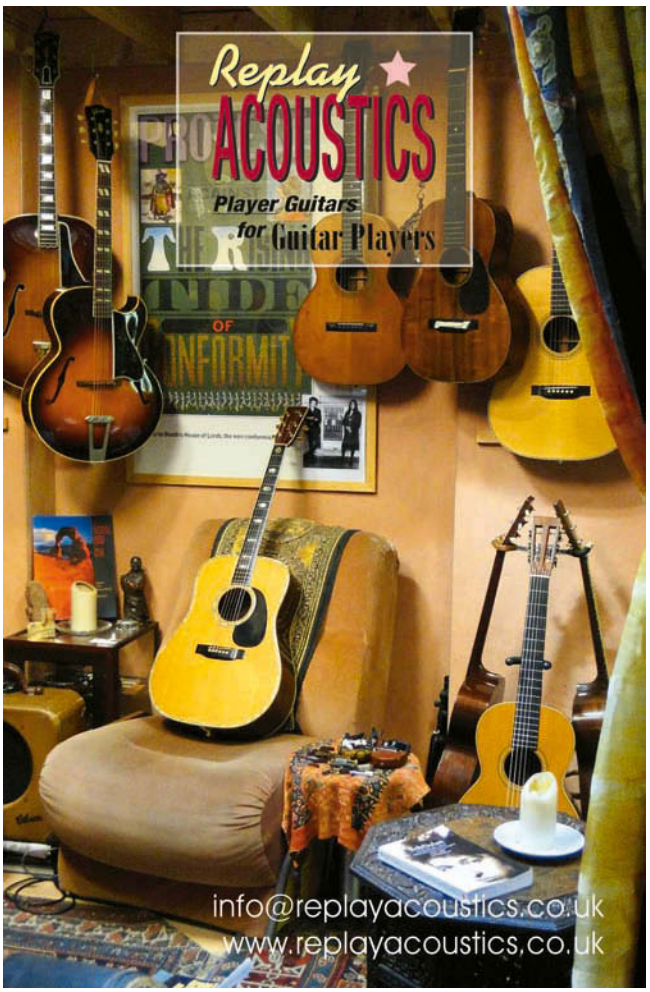

THE LONDON ACOUSTIC SHOW 2016

IN ASSOCIATION WITH **ACOUSTIC MAGAZINE**

GUITAR REVOLUTION

Chris Woods reveals the guitar piece he wants YOU to join him in playing at this year's London Acoustic Show

For the past year I've been working on a piece of music... a piece of music that's purpose is to bring people together. It's made up of four parts: some so simplistic an absolute beginner could learn them and other parts that are perfect for a virtuoso. There is literally a part for everyone to play.

The piece is called 'Guitar Revolution' and it's a piece of music for an infinite number of guitars: it could be played by a handful of mates in a pub or be performed by the population of a large town.

We are launching it at The London Acoustic Show on 10 September and you are invited to learn it and join The Chris Woods Groove Orchestra on stage at Olympia London, so get involved and don't forget your guitar!

There are four parts in this piece:
The **Riff**, which is a simplistic, repeated pattern. It's ideal for less confident players or someone who has never touched a guitar. This is tinted red in the official video.

The **Arpeggio** part, which contains just four chords. It's tinted green in the vid.

The **Melody** – simplistic and catchy. Tinted blue in the video.

And finally the **Advanced** part, which is a real pleasure to wrap your fingers around. This is tinted yellow in the official video.

Now it's up to you to decide which part you want to learn. The tabs for all four parts are included on the next two spreads of this mag. While the tab and in-depth tuition videos are also available to download and view for you from chriswoodsgroove.co.uk and acousticmagazine.com – all for free.

On the day there will be a run through before we perform, so don't panic. Be sure to head to chriswoodsgroove.co.uk/guitarrevolution and sign up to the Guitar Revolution mailing list, so we can let you know any important info.

So that's it; its your chance to learn something new, and be part of creating a truly revolutionary guitar orchestra. Of course, it wouldn't be a revolution without spreading the word, so why not get Jim next door to dust off his guitar and let Sandra at work know? Everyone is welcome.

In this article I'm going to get stuck into helping you with each part, with some notes to make things easier. Whatever part you choose to play on the day I would recommend starting by learning the **Riff** to give you an overview of the piece. Let's get stuck in!

"Of course, it wouldn't be a revolution without spreading the word, so why not get Jim next door to dust off his guitar and let Sandra at work know? Everyone is welcome"

OVERVIEW

As already mentioned there are four parts to this piece, all with varying difficulties. The structure is equally as simplistic with just three sections, we have a main theme, followed by a middle section and finally we have a variation on that main theme.

RIFF

In section one (main theme) we are not quite using chords – just one finger and an open note. There are three shapes to learn and a short motif. The first shape is simply your first finger on the second fret on the A string and the open D string. We alternate between the A string and the open D in a '1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and' rhythm and we play this twice.

The second shape uses an open A string and your third finger fretting the fourth fret on the D string. We play the same pattern as before, striking the A then D string in a '1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and' rhythm, and again we play this twice.

We then come across a short motif playing the open G, then fourth fret on the D string (notice you've just come from there!), followed by an open D, and finally fretting the second fret on the D string.

The final part of the riff has your second finger fretting the note of G on the third fret of the E string and the open D. We alternate between these two notes in the same way as before, except we now do this for three bars.

Loop this whole section around six times, and then stop for one whole bar, counting '1 2 3 4' – this takes us to the middle section.

The middle section is your first full chord, consisting of: fourth fret, D string; open G; and third fret, B string. What's crucial here is the rhythm: we play strings DGB DGB DG. It's helpful to count: '123, 123, 12'. We play this a lot of times, 16 times to be exact. Your best bet is to 'feel' when the change is and/or look at me during the performance, since counting to sixteen when under pressure is surprisingly tricky.

The third section 'variation on main theme' if you're playing the riff, is exactly the same as the main theme, so relax and just loop it around five times and finish with the first note of main theme, letting it ring out.

ARPEGGIO

During the 'main theme' section we use three chords. Picking through the chord in a descending order, with a subtle variation of that chord. But before you start playing notice there is one full cycle without you, eight bars in total. The first chord shape is a B minor barre chord, simply lift off your barre to reveal the open E. The second chord is a B minor chord but with an open A in the bass, so no need to hold that barre down. For the variation simply take away your second finger on the B string (second fret) and add your first finger to the second fret to reveal that C#.

One tricky thing here is that we change half way through the bar to our G shape, so watch out! To make the G shape simple, fret with your second finger on the third fret, E string and your first finger on the D string, second fret. Once you have played through the cycle three times, finish with the note of G, count to the end of the bar and then it's patience time.

We are now in the middle section. Your chord shape, although simple, only comes in after the 'riff players' have played their chord for four bars, so be sure to have your counting hat on.

Once we land in the 'variation on main theme' section, it's all plain sailing. Just repeat the main theme but alternate between those chord variations, for example with the Bmin, release the open E every two beats. Look at the tab for further clarity.

MELODY

There's not too much to say about the melody part – presuming you can use pull-offs the actual melody itself will be easy. The tricky bit is the spaces in between!

This is one of the biggest challenges of playing in an orchestral setting... staying quiet, but staying focused. As you can see from the tab, your part is littered with silences, and those silences are actually hugely important.

To help you get a feeling for what's going on, be sure to master the **Riff** first. Then learn the **Melody** and see if you can play along to the video by simply 'feeling it', counting this one will be tricky.

ADVANCED

The advanced part brings together all the above parts, so it's worth visiting them all before you attempt this. I have tabbed it out in a very simplistic way, but you will notice I tend to play the first note of the bar with a 'rake' or 'slur'. I create this effect by locking the fingers on my picking hand in place and 'rolling' up to the melody note. This really isn't essential, playing in a more simplistic way is equally as great – the subtle differences between how we all play it will add to the sound. Enjoy it and take your time. ■

GUITAR REVOLUTION – RIFF (RED IN OFFICIAL VIDEO)

GUITAR REVOLUTION – ADVANCED (YELLOW IN OFFICIAL VIDEO)

GUITAR REVOLUTION – ARPEGGIO (GREEN IN OFFICIAL VIDEO)

GUITAR REVOLUTION – MELODY (BLUE IN OFFICIAL VIDEO)

FROM SEED TO SONG

Dave Nowak tells the tale of the 'Ancient Sitka' and the men who introduced it to the world

I have always been fascinated with the many ways in which man has been able to use wood. We were initially quite utilitarian in our use of this natural resource, using it to keep us warm at night by burning it. We then crafted spears and traps to hunt and harvest animals and fish. And, we eventually used it to build homes and keep the rain off our heads. But perhaps the most magical use of wood was to create music with it.

In its most basic form we would use a stick and block, striking the two together to create beats to march and dance to. We have also used it to house 88 keys of ivory, striking hammer against tensioned strings to allow some of the greatest composers to create music that has stood the test of time. But perhaps the most versatile form is six metal strings and a box made of wood. In the hands of a skilled musician the guitar can be used to tell a story or start a movement.

THE TIMBER

There is a certain mystique that surrounds the wood used in modern day handbuilt acoustic guitars. Mass produced guitars purchased at big box stores use plywood and generic species of wood to create instruments that some would say lack soul, and sound hollow and lifeless. In order to resonate and ring true, a guitar must use wood that is as vibrant as it is strong. Unfortunately, the demand for woods

that are rich in tone has caused a depletion of old growth wood used for the soundboards in today's guitars. In fact, the reason today's luthiers have moved towards using Sitka spruce for soundboards is because the demand for its East Coast relative, the Adirondack spruce, led to the near extinction of the species. It also was the catalyst for the whole industry to turn to more ecological means of harvesting these now rare and often storied woods.

ENTER THE ANCIENT SITKA

More than 3,000 years ago a Sitka sapling rooted itself on a south-facing mountain slope on what is now known as Prince of Wales Island. There it grew for several centuries, absorbing carbon dioxide and expelling oxygen. In approximately 850 BC a massive storm with heavy rains and strong winds caused a landslide, washing the tree down the slope and burying it under rock, dirt and rubble. And there it lay, encased in rock and mud, protected from decay and allowing highly mineralised seeps to saturate its wood fibres for nearly 3,000 years.

In the business of tonewoods, I am told that there is some controversy over how to best realise the tonal qualities of music wood. Green wood that is recently cut and then seasoned and dried in a hurried manner often splits and cracks. But wood seasoned in the round with its protective bark still intact allows the wood to age and season without movement. However, whether or not there are any differences in the tone of the wood is up for debate. But imagine a log, naturally preserved and allowed to permeate with minerals from the soils and iron seeps over several thousand years. What is the impact on its ability to make music?

THE PROSPECTOR

The discovery of the Ancient Sitka was rather serendipitous and perhaps adds to the mythology behind this storied wood. In 2010, Brent Cole of Alaska Specialty Woods, a company that practices the ecological harvesting of tonewoods, was clearing his lot for a new soundboard factory. Near the end of the excavation several pieces of wood, some of which still had bark on them with no evidence of rot, were uncovered. The milling of tonewoods is often a gamble. An entire tree that looks great from the outside may only yield a handful of soundboards and the cost of the tree is not always recoverable with the sale of the guitar tops and soundboards. Regardless of the risk, he decided that excavating the entire tree was worth it.

When I asked Brent what makes this tonewood different than other species and other Sitka he has worked with, he tells me that when it is first cut the wood is the usual subtle golden colour that Sitka is known for. But once exposed to oxygen, the soluble minerals – likely iron from the numerous seeps in the area that have saturated the wood fibres – oxidise and create the unique blue/grey colour within a matter of minutes. One of the reasons that Sitka spruce is used for soundboards is its quality of having tension along the grain yet being flexible across the grain line to allow the wood to resonate. In the case of the Ancient Sitka, Brent explains that this well-seasoned and highly saturated wood remains very stiff even when cut so far off the vertical grain, almost like a hardwood. Based on its intrinsic characteristics, Brent surmises that this wood would be expected to create exquisite tone when employed in a stringed instrument. But it is often market demand and the wood's extrinsic qualities, or good looks, that sell.

THE ARCHITECT

By the time I met Reuben Forsland of Joi Guitars, he had already gained notoriety as being a luthier who makes his guitars from fabled woods and exotic materials that tell a story. Forsland is well known both locally and abroad for innovative use of repurposed lumber and salvaged timbers and his eclectic use of 'found items'. He has made it a habit of creating themed acoustic guitars that can move one to make music before ever striking a chord. It is no wonder that he was one of the first luthiers to realise the unique beauty and tonal characteristics of the Ancient Sitka.

In 2014, Forsland first introduced the world to the Ancient Sitka when he fabricated a guitar

for Grammy winner and Rock and Roll Hall of Famer, Slash of Guns N' Roses. I am told that in early conversations, Slash made few requests regarding the materials used in the guitar, although he did specifically ask for the guitar top to be made with the Ancient Sitka.

Reuben has since completed a second guitar using the Ancient Sitka as an homage to the tree itself, and it's the first in a series dedicated to ancient tonewoods.

Dubbed the 'Long Dark', the guitar features the Ancient Sitka top but the rest of the guitar – back, sides, neck, fingerboard, bridge, binding and rosette – is Gabon ebony with silver trim to symbolise the millennia the Sitka spent encased in a tomb of black mud and rock, allowing iron and soluble minerals to seep into its fibres.

The Long Dark is a JM model with a 655mm scale length. Inside, the guitar has Sitka bracing, dual laminated sides for strength, a carbon fibre reinforced neck with 14-frets to the body, dual action truss rod, dual carbon neck stiffeners that extend 3 inches into the neck block, 1¾" nut width, 2 ¼" string spacing, and a custom JOI Guitars pinless ebony bridge. When the Ancient Sitka is paired with the ebony, which is well known for its deep bass and excellent sustain, the guitar produces a deep and rich sound with a haunting resonance as one would expect from these primeval woods.

THE VERDICT

When I first heard 'Sweet Child O'Mine' I was 14, and that song bumped 'Stairway To Heaven' – after a 10 year run – off being number one at my high school's annual 'Top 20' fall dance. That riff has since been touted as one of the best rock riffs of all time. Although Slash departed Guns N' Roses in 1993, he continued to play music with a number of hard rock super bands, including Velvet Revolver, Slash's Snakepit and with Myles Kennedy and the Conspirators. Of course, Slash has performed with a reunited GNR this year.

The top hat-wearing guitarist is said to own more than 100 working guitars, and he is rarely seen strumming anything but a Gibson Les Paul Standard live. But on the acoustic side of his collection, he has owned classic Gibsons, Guilds and Martins. In the fall of 2014, Slash spoke with Reuben Forsland and asked him to build an acoustic guitar and simply put, wanted it to sound 'amazing'. What he got in return was in his own words, "the most amazing guitar I ever played or heard. Perfect tone, perfect sound and a beautiful instrument."

A guitar is a sum of its parts, so to credit the accolades of this instrument specifically to the Ancient Sitka, would be somewhat egocentric. But the natural beauty of the wood, combined with its tonal qualities, makes it hard not to consider it responsible for the 'amazing' sound of his or any guitar that uses this ancient wood. ■

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ANDY BOLE

STYLE… ROOTS

Bonfire Radicals is a Birmingham-based band, playing mainly self-composed folk-influenced music. Formed in 2011, the band comprises myself (guitar and bouzouki), Katie Stevens (clarinet and other woodwinds), Michelle Holloway (recorders, vocals), Trevor Lines (bass), Liam Halloran (drums) and Sarah Farmer (fiddle). Our original material is based around good stomping tunes that don't necessarily fit the usual rhythmic and harmonic conventions. Our recently released debut album is called *The Albino Peacock* after the opening track. Written by Trevor, it started life as part of a pair of fake 18th-century 3/2 Cheshire hornpipes and metamorphosed into an imitation New Orleans street dance with a mock bouzouki riff by myself. Apart from the guitar, my big love is the bouzouki, and I'm influenced by non-European sounds. My favourite tracks on the album? 'Coffee Countdown' for its caffeine-fuelled madness, and 'I Wish' for exactly the opposite reason. I have various Martin and Taylor acoustics, but my favourite is a Larrivée OM9. I also use two electric guitars – an Italia 12-string, which I've had for four years, and a Gibson SG that I've owned since 1978. I also play sax and mandolin. My guitar goes into a Line 6 Pod HD500X multi-FX unit, which goes into a TC Electronics Flashback X4 delay and then a TC Electronics Ditto X2 looper. That feeds into a Line 6 DT25 valve amp designed by Reinhold Bogner. I enjoy playing both pick and fingerstyle, as they bring out different aspects of my playing. Alternate tunings? Yes, I like to use DADGAD and low C. I also like to experiment with a lot of drone strings. The band is composing new material for a second album. We will be playing at various venues across the country over the summer, followed by a nationwide tour in November. I have also been recording a solo bouzouki album and will be performing solo at UK festivals this summer.

www.bonfireradicals.com, www.andybole.co.uk

KENDL WINTER

STYLE… AMERICANA

I'm a banjo- and guitar-playing songstress living on a houseboat in Olympia, Washington, and the lower half of the duo the Lowest Pair. I met my singing and picking partner Palmer T Lee at a bluegrass festival years ago. We had a magical chemistry, then three years ago he contacted me about starting a double banjo project. Our songs focus on the depth and discrepancies of ourselves, our desires, experiences and longings. We've just released two albums simultaneously – *Uncertain As It Is Uneven* and *Fern Girl And Ice Man*. My favourite track on *Uncertain…* is Palmer's song 'Keweenaw Flower'. It's well written, and I loved getting to play double guitar for it. On *Fern Girl…*, 'When They Dance The Mountains Shake' turned out really cool because of the production. Dave Simonett from Trampled By Turtles had the idea to add drums and Erik Koskinen nailed them. It was neat to hear the usual duo fleshed out with a band. My regular guitar is a Gretsch G9220 Bobtail acoustic/electric sunburst resonator. I like the sustain and tone it has, and it's a bright contrast with Palmer's Martin dreadnought. Is it my favourite? No. It's a great guitar, but I have this old hollow-bodied archtop Guild from the 1950s that's waiting for me when I come home. I have a LR Baggs Para Acoustic and Boss tuning pedal, but lately we've been performing around a single large diaphragm microphone called The Ear Trumpet. My regular banjo is an Ome resonator, maple and gold tone ring with a clear head. It's beautiful – bright but warm. I have a Kavanjo pickup and run it through the same set-up as my guitar. On the guitar I play both pick and fingerstyle, and on the banjo I use both three-finger and frailing. In the Lowest Pair I tend to claw hammer since Palmer's more of a picker – the two styles complement each other. Future plans? A huge summer of US festivals and promoting the new albums.

www.thelowestpair.com

PAUL MCKENNA

STYLE… TRADITIONAL/FOLK

Based in Glasgow, I studied classical guitar before focusing on traditional music and songwriting. Formed in 2006, the Paul McKenna Band features me (guitar and vocals), Sean Gray (flutes and whistles), Ewan Baird (percussion) and Conor Markey (banjo and guitar). We also work with fiddlers Jack Smedley and Robbie Greig. We focus on traditional and folk songs and I write songs that work well in that environment. Writing can be a long process that can take weeks or something that can happen within a couple of hours. All the band have an input to the final arrangements. Our 10th album, *Paths That Wind*, has more original material than before. The title comes from my song 'Long Days' which was written while living in America for a year. I missed friends and family so the song is about those feelings. My favourite track? 'The Dream'. I wrote it after Freddie Gray was killed in Baltimore and the message of the song is very important to me. When I'm touring, I play an O C Bear Lexington guitar made by Clint Bear in Madison, Indiana. Clint is a great maker and I love playing guitars that have been built by one person or a small team. It's a wonderful sounding guitar. I also have a McIlroy A25 guitar that I use when recording, an Andy Tobin bouzouki and a Davy Stuart 10-string bouzouki. I use a Fire-Eye Red-Eye twin preamp and also use a Boss tuner and a Boss OC-3 octave pedal and TC Electronic reverb and delay pedals. My pickup is a K&K Mini. I use my nails for finger picking and a pick for strumming/flat picking. Alternate tunings? I use drop D quite a lot, also DADGAD and open C. I'm currently working on my songwriting, and plan to spend some time in Nashville this year. The band is playing in Edinburgh on 30 September, then I have a small solo tour of some Scottish folk clubs in November.

www.paulmckennaband.com

STU HANNA

STYLE… FOLK ROOTS

Megson formed in 2004 when my future wife Debbie and I were looking for a project to collaborate on. Debs had studied classical singing, specialising in choral and early music, while I'd always played in punk bands – folk seemed like a nice compromise between styles. Over the years we've been nominated three times for the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards and three times been winners of the Spiral Earth Awards. Our latest album, *Good Times Will Come Again*, is the first record where we've written it all ourselves. My favourite track to perform is 'Zero' – it's got a Northumbrian fiddle tune in the middle that we like to sing, impersonating the fiddle sound – a bit weird but good fun. I'm also a producer [Hanna has worked with Show of Hands and the Young 'uns] and produced the album myself, but it nearly didn't happen, as I lost my voice during the sessions. Luckily it came back just in time to finish it off. My regular guitars are both Martins – a D-16GT and a 00-15. I prefer the D-16's tone – it's warm and you can hit it hard without any problems. But I'm small, and it's pretty deep, so I get shoulder ache. The 00-15 is easier on the shoulder, as it's smaller bodied, and it's great for picking out midrange melody lines. I play them through an Orchard Pre-Amp/DI, and use a Boss equaliser and octave pedals with analogue delay. I also play a Sherwood octave mandola. I mainly use a pick, as it gives me more dynamics in live situations, though I do find that fingerstyle is better with songs where the lyrics need to be exposed, as strumming can clutter the frequency range of syllables. Alternate tunings? I use DADGAD, DADGAE, EADGAE and EADGAD. Trying a new tuning or a new guitar helps me write. Future plans? We are currently working on a Megson songbook and preparing for a UK tour, starting with the Cambridge Folk Festival in July.

www.megsonmusic.co.uk

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KEB' MO'
THAT HOT PINK BLUES ALBUM
WWW.KEBMO.COM

Kevin Moore aka Keb' Mo', came onto the scene in the 90s, part of the quest to dig up some young bloods who could sing acoustic blues. Blessed with a voice that reeked sanctified soul, and sharing stages with Eric Clapton and BB King, Keb' looked set. But these days, it seems the blues has been replaced by mid-tempo funk numbers like 'Government Cheese'. And even when he begins to get dirty, throwing in slide guitar on the introduction to 'She Just Wants To Dance', it's just a foil for yet another cool mid-tempo funk plod. Recorded live, Keb's wonderful voice and flashes of tasteful acoustic guitar do win through, but bring on the grit next time. **JP**

THE SMALL GLORIES
WONDROUS TRAVELLER
WWW.THESMALLGLORIES.COM

'There ain't nobody that can sing like me,' Cara Luft and JD Edwards howl, over a thumping bass drum and banjo, on their punchy cover of Woody Guthrie's 'Way Over Yonder In The Minor Key', and they could be right. Cara Luft was co-founder of Canadian folksters the Wailin' Jennys, and teaming up with multi-instrumentalist JD Edwards, has produced an album that never seems to pause for breath. Handclaps and Cara's claw-hammer banjo introduce the eerie 'Had I Paid' and when JD gets to front the show on 'Something To Hold Onto', his raw vocals are a treat. There's no shortage of duos out there, but on this showing, the Small Glories have more clout than most. **JP**

TOM DOUGHTY
CAN'T TEACH AN OLD DOG
WWW.TOMDOUGHTY.COM

Limiting yourself to acoustic lap slide is a brave move, but with Tom Doughty, force of circumstances have dictated that he has no choice, and over the years he's evolved into a player of staggering ability and – as this latest release shows – peerless taste. Predictably perhaps, the blues makes itself felt early on, with Tom's song 'Journeyman Blues'; but from there on in, Tom takes the listener on a journey which dazzles at every turn. From a suitably funky version of Marvin Gaye's 'Heard It Through The Grapevine' and 'Out Of The Asylum', a jazz-based instrumental with nods to John Fahey, there seems to be nothing Tom can't pull off. Ry Cooder better watch his back. **JP**

LISBEE STAINTON
WORD GAMES
WWW.LISBEESTAINTON.COM

Ms Stainton is a fully paid-up member of Seth Lakeman's band, so it's no surprise to find her boss credited with two co–writes. Folk music still exerts a strong pull on her material, but Lakeman's always been pushing the boundaries, and Stainton looks set to follow his lead. Songs like 'Eloise' with its complex string arrangements and eight-string guitar owe more to Kate Bush than Kate Rusby, and the drum rolls on the beautifully haunting 'Fool's Gold' further enhances the Bush effect. Just where it's all going is a mystery, but as the album unfolds from one wonder to the next, Lisbee's vocals are imbued with such a rare intimacy and beauty that it really doesn't matter. **JP**

DANA AND SUSAN ROBINSON
THE ANGEL'S SHARE
WWW.ROBINSONGS.COM

When you've spent a decade hanging out in Asheville, North Carolina, the odds are that some of that old-timey mountain music is going to rub off. But while guitarist Dana and banjo-picking Susan Robinson plunder the genre as they strut their stuff on the traditional fiddle-led romps 'Five Miles From Town' and 'Allene's Waltz', the album's peppered with enough original songs to ensure that these guys are heard as something other than mere conservationists. It's all very summery, doesn't hit any nerves, and there's not a note out of place. **JP**

ELIZABETH COOK
EXODUS OF VENUS
WWW.ELIZABETH-COOK.COM

Nashville-based renegade Elizabeth Cook has come up with that rare commodity – an album which is a blast from start to finish. Why this girl isn't better known is a travesty. The title track opens with an immense wash of rough synth and backwards guitar, before a chiming guitar and thudding drum bring in Ms Cook singing "Knives are made for stabbin', arms are made for peace." Blessed with one of those soulful country voices aching with heartache, as the album unfolds she shows she can tackle just about anything that comes her way. Brilliantly produced with guitar tones to die for, this is one stonking album. **JP**

OZERE
FINDING ANYPLACE
WWW.OZERE.BANDCAMP.COM

There seems to be no end to the current outpourings of great acoustic talent from Canada, and this five-piece outfit from Toronto, who blend bluegrass, Celtic influences, Balkan music and chamber music, are a force to be reckoned with. From kick-off, when Emily Rockarts drips her seductive vocals over a sprightly mix of a shuddering cello and mandolin on 'The Sun Ain't Down', to the eerie Irish jig of 'Anyplace' with its Saz-like melody lines, and the stripped down folky feel of 'The Parting', it's an album that holds you in its thrall as you wonder just what might come next. **JP**

LIZABETT RUSSO
THE BURNING MOUNTAIN
WWW.LIZABETTRUSSO.COM

Although she's apparently a Scottish resident, it's Russo's Transylvanian heritage that's well to the fore on the spooky 'Mother's Song'. As Lizabett lets rip, her vocals achieve an almost Björk-like intensity, equally unsettling and freaky; it's hard not to imagine visions of misty mountains, and dark woods running amok with bears. Her forte is a high warble that comes into its own on – fittingly – 'Monsters At Night', easing in and out of the mix over a faint throbbing cello and ethereal voices. This isn't late night listening, but, on the other hand, if you remember 'The Monster Mash', this one might be for you. **JP**

ANNIE KEATING
TRICK STAR
WWW.ANNIEKEATING.COM

Coming on rather like Lucinda Williams without the angst, having been under the radar too long, this is Boston troubadour Annie Keating's seventh album. Inspired by her childhood, the title song 'Trick Star Bicycle', choogles along in a happy pop country mould, broken up by some gnarly Stonesy riffing. But for the most part this is sun-dappled Americana, a feel that continues on 'Come and Go', a weeping pedal steel hovering in the mix, before the country honk of 'Creatures' and the gentle 'Growing Season', where Annie's little girl lost voice will enchant anyone but a deaf shoe-gazer. **JP**

ANNA & ELIZABETH
ANNA & ELIZABETH
WWW.ANNAANDELIZABETH.COM

Setting yourselves up as custodians of any music tradition can be a hard road to travel, but it's presumably something that doesn't bother Elizabeth Laprelle or Anna Roberts-Gevalt. As you shut your eyes and listen to them singing their Appalachian ballads, you can almost hear the wind howling and smell the pine resin. Having studied at the feet of master musicians in Kentucky and Virginia, they are consummate masters of their art. From the opening bars of their a capella take on the traditional ballad 'Long Time Travellin", Dock Boggs' 'Little Black Train', the chilling gospel 'Don't Want To Die In The Storm', this is one incredible journey. **JP**

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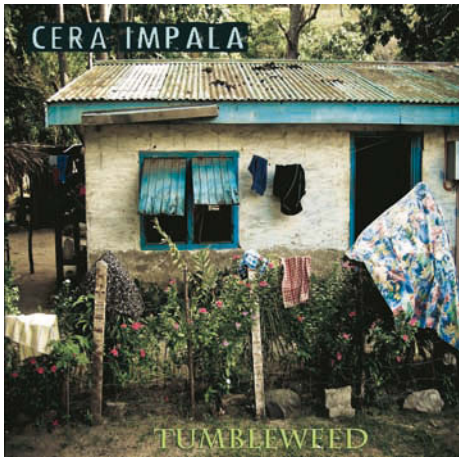
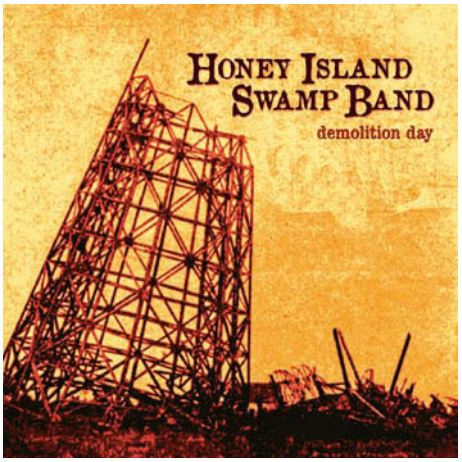


CERA IMPALA
TUMBLEWEED
WWW.CERAIMPALA.COM

Boasting a '100 per cent guitar free' certification, Impala is a banjo, ukulele toting mama from Flagstaff Arizona, whose music weaves an eclectic route between folk, swing and the downright unexpected. Backed by two gentlemen who call themselves The New Prohibition – Dirk Ronneburg on fiddle and Joel Sanderson on double bass – the trio's music swirls in and out of songs like 'Little Bird' and 'You're Not Yours'. Just as it's all getting too laid back for comfort, on 'Roll A Joint', the guys slide up a gear into a crazy, freewheeling swing, the venerable Mary McMaster adds some celestial harp to 'Flicker 'n' Swing', but mostly the material never quite catches fire. **JP**

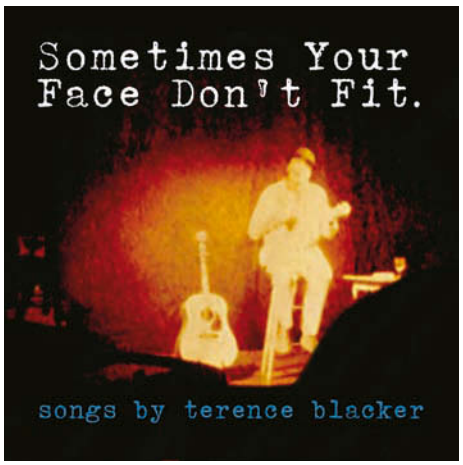
JOSHUA BURNELL
INTO THE GREEN
WWW.JOSHUABURNELL.CO.UK

The days when 'The Lord Of The Rings' was compulsory reading might be long gone, but Tolkein's masterwork serves as inspiration for this intriguing release by York-based musician Joshua Burnell. Graced by sensational CD artwork courtesy of Tolkein illustrator Ted Nasmith, Joshua and a vast supporting cast romp through 14 of his quirky folk songs. Conjure up a mix of Jethro Tull's rustic mode, a dash of early Black Sabbath, a whiff of ganja, and you'll be there. A welcome blast of originality in our serious world, it's a hugely impressive work and a lot of fun. **JP**



HONEY ISLAND SWAMP BAND
DEMOLITION DAY
WWW.HONEYISLANDSWAMPBAND.COM

When an album's recorded onto 2" tape in New Orleans, and Luther Dickinson's at the board, you know you're in for a treat. 'How Do You Feel' sounds like a whiskey-sodden Stones studio out-take, and when the band hit the swampy chug of 'Head High Water Blues', or you catch the horns stabbing on 'Medicated', you can almost smell the red beans and rice. With some great guitar work – Chris Mule sounds like he was raised on Duane Allman – and songs that are all sprinkled with that special southern magic, 'Demolition Day' is the kind of glorious jukebox rewind you don't want to stop. **JP**



TERENCE BLACKER
SOMETIMES YOUR FACE DON'T FIT
WWW.TERENCEBLACKER.COM

'Her hair was blonde, she couldn't play, but I watched her anyway' Terence Blacker sings on 'Young Girl With A Ukulele', and with this intimate admission, hits the You Tube nail right on its seductive head. Terence weaves a path between Jacques Brel and Dudley Moore, with highlights including the rollicking 'Would You Love Me If I Were A Brazilian' and 'Too Much Information', a song for our times indeed. Other choice lyrics include: "Someone's had a screening, they think they've found a lump, someone's got a guinea pig, looks like Donald Trump." You get the idea. It's all very funny and makes you want to catch the guy live. **JP**

DANA IMMANUEL & THE STOLEN BAND
COME WITH ME
WWW.DANAIMMANUEL.COM

Dana is a 'banjo toting, whiskey drinking, poker playing' songstress fronting a scary bunch of five young ladies from north London. And 'Come With Me' certainly provides a taste of what's to come; a foot-stomping, banjo-led mesmeric groove, with wailing fuzzed out electric guitar and wild harmonies. It's all crazy, anarchic stuff, but as one song morphs into another, and yet another deranged chorus and ferocious fiddle fandango erupts, you just hope they'll stop soon. **JP**

JON KENZIE
FROM WANDERLUST
WWW.JONKENZIE.COM

From busking to appearing at SXSW in Austin, Texas, Jon's a guy who's been around the musical block. And it shows. The dark sounds of Mat Owens' bowed double bass introduce his fourth album, before a harmonium's drone and his urgent acoustic guitar takes over. It's the first of an imaginative set of songs, veering from the endearing soft acoustic 'If I Ever Did Find', to the stripped-down 'Step and Stumble'. It's all cleverly conceived, and on quiet atmospheric numbers like 'Can You Decide', as Jon's tender vocals flow over his pulsing acoustic, it's easy to imagine greatness around the corner. **JP**

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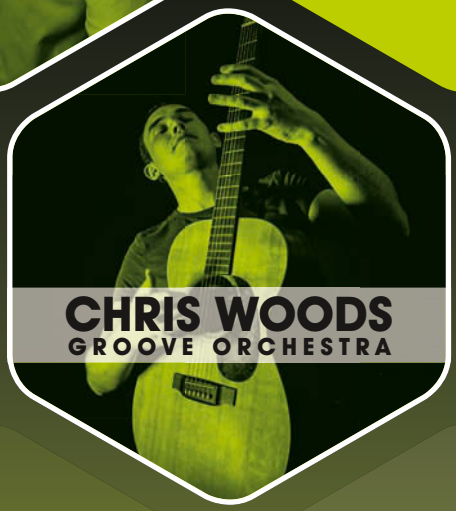

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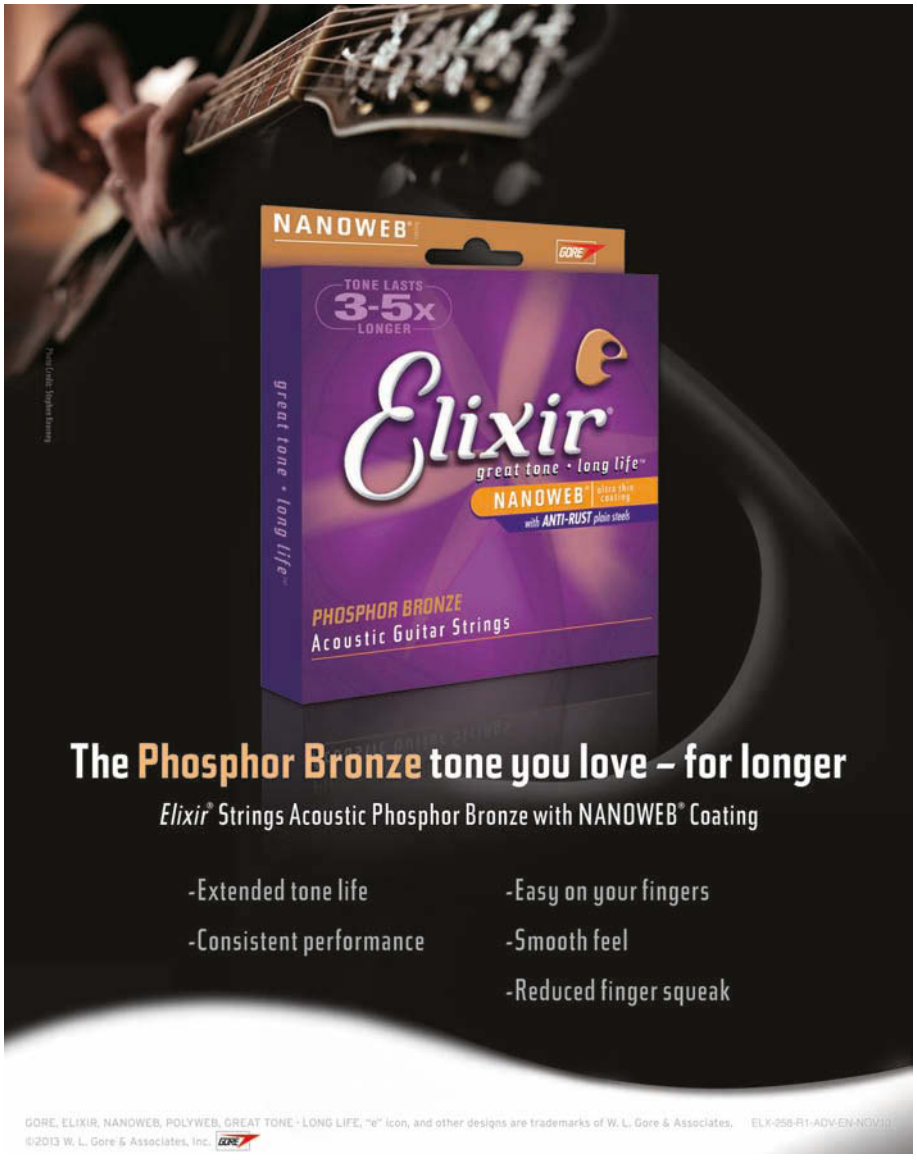

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Standard guitar tuning has its roots in the early Renaissance when the four course, double-strung guitar was tuned DGBE. In the Baroque era, a fifth 'A' course was added, typically tuned an octave higher along with the D string. The six-string guitar tuned EADGBE has been around since the 1770s, although contemporary with it were the 'English' guitar or guittar tuned CEGCEG and the Russian seven-string guitar tuned DGBDGBD.

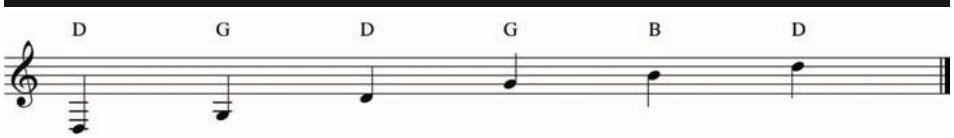
The European 'Guitarmania' of the early 19th century saw a wealth of guitar sheet music published, not only by familiar classical names like Sor and Giuliani, but also the virtuoso 'shredders' of the era – Legnani, Zani Di Ferranti and Rigondi, among others. The vast majority are in standard tuning, although drop D (bottom E tuned down a whole step) is not uncommon.

The earliest published American music for altered tuning six-string guitar is 'The Celebrated Violet Waltz' by Henry Worrell from 1852. A theme and variations written in open G tuning: DGDGBD – as shown in **example 1**.

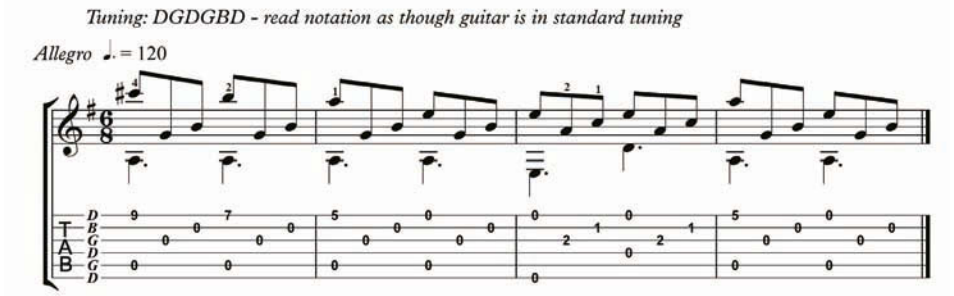
A few years later Worrell re-published the piece under the title 'The Spanish Fandango' with a new set of variations and notated so that if you play it as written, as though reading standard tuning, the note placement accommodates the altered tuning, as evidenced in **example 2**.

This publication, together with Worrel's 'The Siege Of Sebastopol' in open D-tuning (DADF#AD), made a deep impression on American guitar culture and it appears in various method books at the turn of the 20th century. These tunings are still identified as 'Spanish' and 'Sebastopol'. Along with the open E and A variants, they are characteristic of the playing of Robert Johnson and other classic rural blues guitarists and slide masters.

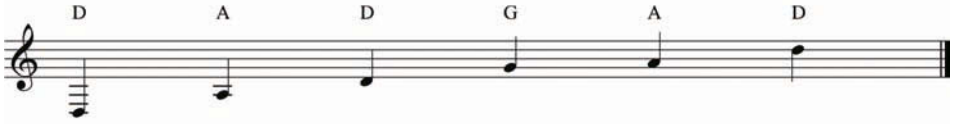
EXAMPLE 1



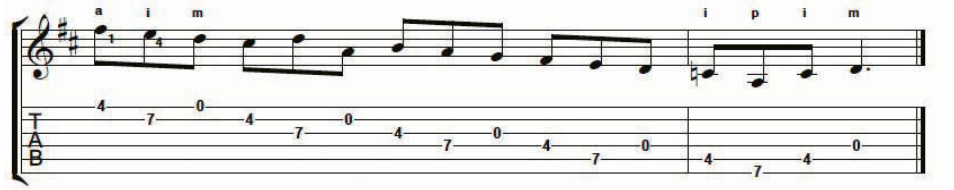
EXAMPLE 2



EXAMPLE 3



EXAMPLE 4



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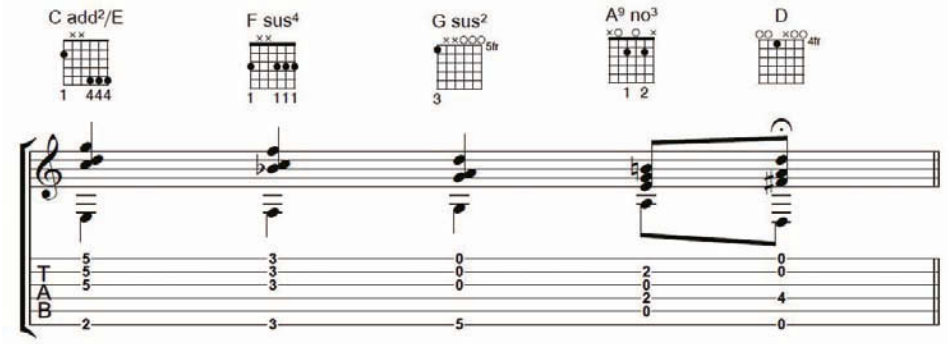
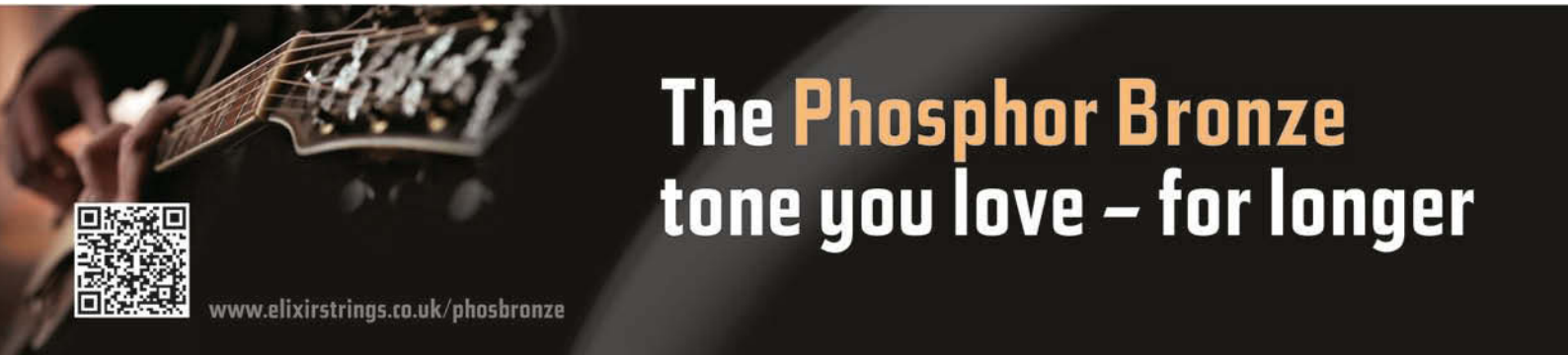
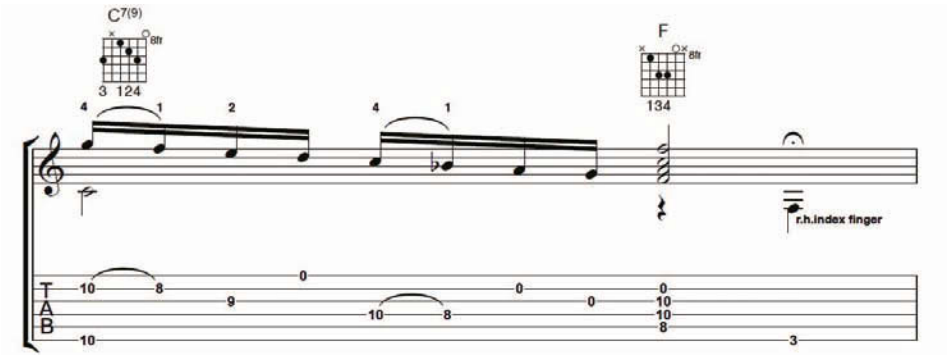
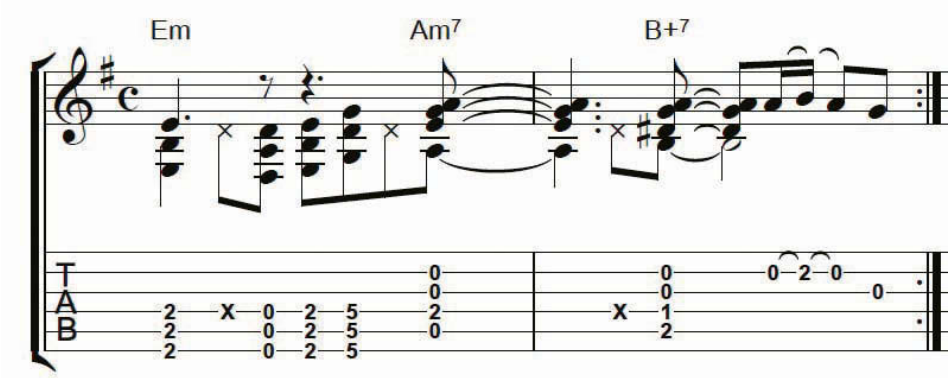




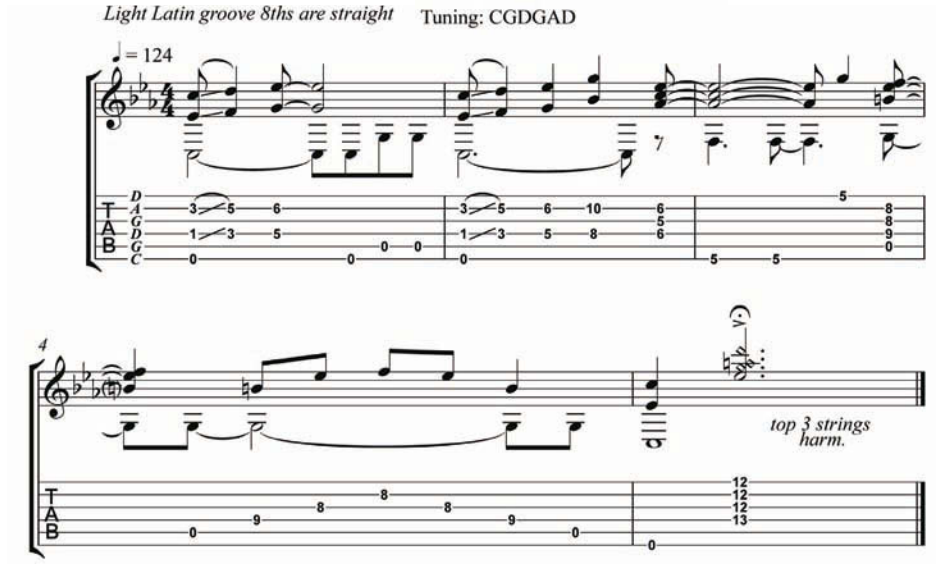
EXAMPLE 6



EXAMPLE 7



EXAMPLE 8



Keith Richards has adopted open G as his 'standard' tuning, although he omits the bottom string, and Joni Mitchell has used altered tunings extensively – 'Big Yellow Taxi' is in open E (EBEG#BE – open D, tuned up a whole step).

As a composer and arranger, I enjoy the open chord tonality of these tunings and their minor key versions, but prefer DADGAD, which, being a suspended tuning, gives me a much more open palette to work with.

In DADGAD (**example 3**), the first and sixth strings are pitched an octave above and below the fourth string respectively, so the familiar fingerings on that string are repeated on strings six and one. Likewise, the second string A is an octave copy of the fifth string. Most obvious is the third and second string G-A relationship. Having two adjacent scale tones on adjacent strings opens up the fingering to cascading scale patterns. Notice the symmetry in the left hand fingering in **example 4**.

The cluster of a 2nd plus a 4th that is created by the top 3 strings serves to thicken a melody line. Supported with a contrary motion bass line, the result demonstrates how DADGAD lends itself to more 'suspended' harmony. Cross-picking produces a resonant blend of melody, harmony and texture.

Play **example 6** slowly. In order to keep the F chord ringing in the last measure, use the right hand *i* finger to hammer onto the low F.

DADGAD is useful in neighbouring keys like A minor and E minor as well flat keys like F and Bb, which are not always fingerboard-friendly in standard tuning. In my own arranging and composing, I've found it to be a versatile tool for creating texture and sonorities that are typically unavailable in standard tuning.

The *x* notation in **example 7** indicates a light percussive slap on the strings. Notice the root-5th- octave 'power' chord on the bottom three strings, while the open G and A strings add the harmonic interest to the Am7 and B+7 chords.

A related tuning is CGDGAD, which is DADGAD with the bottom two strings tuned down a whole step. **Example 8** is an excerpt from my tune 'Guitar Noir.' Michael Hedges, who developed a slew of quite radical altered tunings, used a variant of this tuning for his 'Aerial Boundaries' – C2C3DGAD. Other exponents of low C tunings were Nick Drake, who used CGCFCE for 'Pink Moon', and John Martyn whose 'Solid Air' is in CGEbFBbD.

I find it helpful to look at altered tunings not primarily in terms of learned shapes, but to be aware of the musical 'meta information' – the notes themselves and their intervallic relationships. We are used to the same notes being located in multiple positions on the fingerboard. As musicians, the challenge is to relate that information to a changed fingerboard landscape. With patience and practice, altered tunings can open a new world of sonority and texture. ■

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GORDON GILTRAP INSTRUMENTAL ARTIST

‘PRELUDE TO PASTORAL’

Gordon turns back the clock to 1977 for a look at a track off Perilous Journey

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: ADVANCED

For this month’s piece, ‘Prelude To Pastoral’, I am going to take you back in time to the year 1977 and an album called *Perilous Journey*, which featured two preludes. The second one, ‘Prelude to Morbio Gorge’, will be featured in my next column. This was an interesting period in my life because it produced the surprising hit single and now classic Giltrap composition ‘Heartsong’. The history of the piece is featured elsewhere.

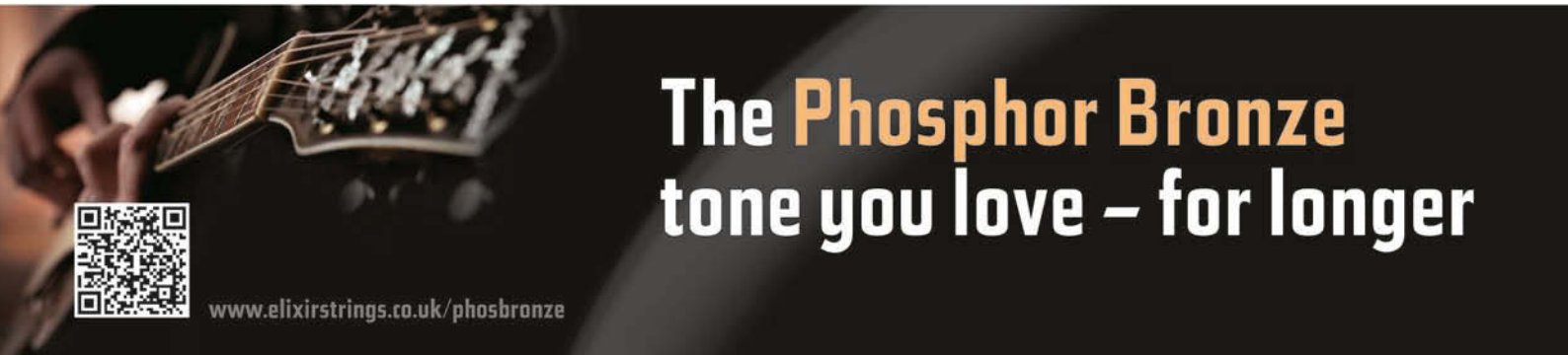
In the opening bar you will see a hammer-on and pull-off section preceded by the open sixth string with the fourth fret, first string above. The reason for this is to ensure a clean start into the hammered section. You will see I’m hammering on to the seventh fret, fifth string. This is to give a percussive element to that section.

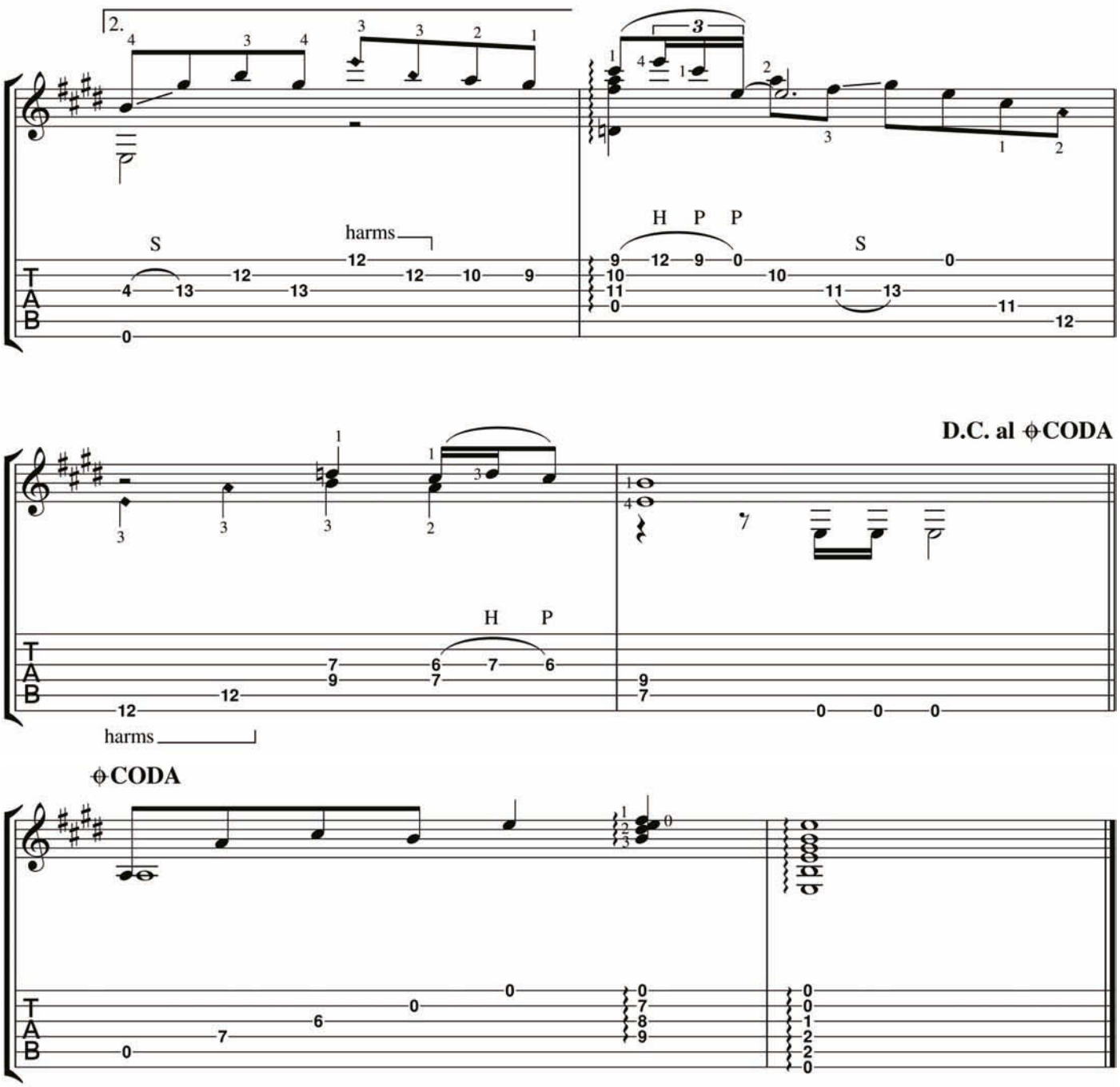
In bar three we have a rapid hammer-on and pull-off section. This may take a little while to master, but just start slowly and build up. The fingering is clearly marked and I recommend using the fourth finger to execute this. The last two quavers in that section (fourth fret, fourth string; second fret, third string) is achieved by using a barre shape, which should makes things easier.

The last quaver in bar five into bar six from the seventh fret, sixth string up to the ninth fret could be made easier by an optional slide. In bar seven the last note of that bar is marked to be played with the first finger. On closer examination this should played with the fourth finger. The preceding two notes are played using the first and third fingers.

Finally, after the repeat section the transition from bar four into bar nine. Take

‘PRELUDE TO PASTORAL’ – GORDON GILTRAP





note that there is no suggested fingering here. I suggest using the second finger for the slide from the fourth fret up to the 13th fret requiring a swift finger change.

Enjoy this vintage Giltrap piece and I look forward very much to sharing more with you next time and looking into another prelude piece: 'Prelude to Morbio Gorge'

The piece is taken from my *Vintage Giltrap* book published by The Troubadour's Music. This, and many more of my pieces, can be downloaded by going to www.lathkillmusic.co.uk ■

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CHRIS GIBBONS COMPOSER

COUNTRY SPICE

Chris provides some hot licks to raise your country playing to the next level

FULL TAB ONLINE

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

In my previous articles on country guitar we've started with some simple ideas regarding strumming styles, using bass notes and runs to join chords, adding connecting lines and decorations, pull offs and hammer ons and other techniques which characterise the country style.

This month I've given you a whole bunch of 'hot licks' to spice up your playing. These can be used as intros, ending and fills, or as a basis for your solos.

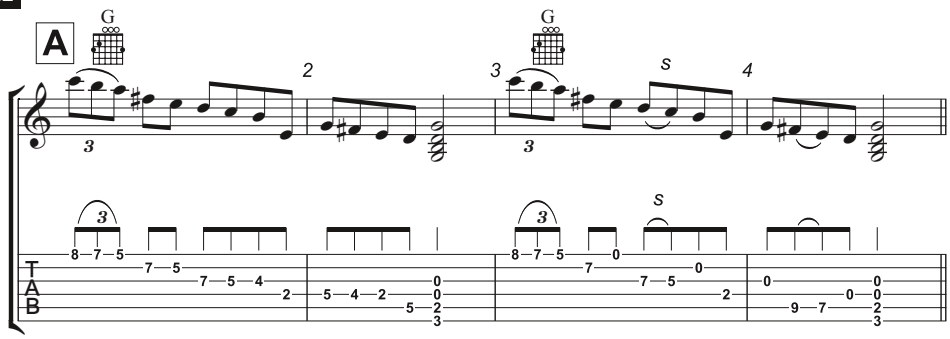
In these examples we'll look at some new techniques that will add zest and colour to your performance. You may find the requirements difficult in some instances, but there are simpler licks you can find here, and when mastered, return to the more challenging examples in this lesson.

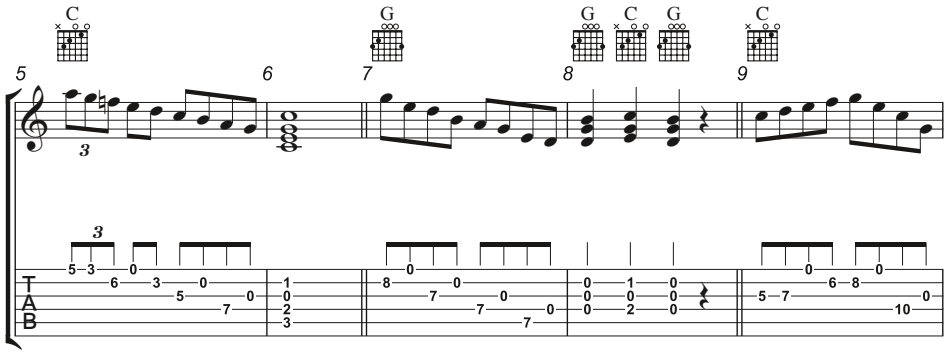
In bars one to 17, we are using a 'carillon' technique, which literally means 'to sound like bells'. To achieve this we alter the fingering so that we can use open strings that ring out, while also allowing a previous note to continue ringing by keeping the finger in place.

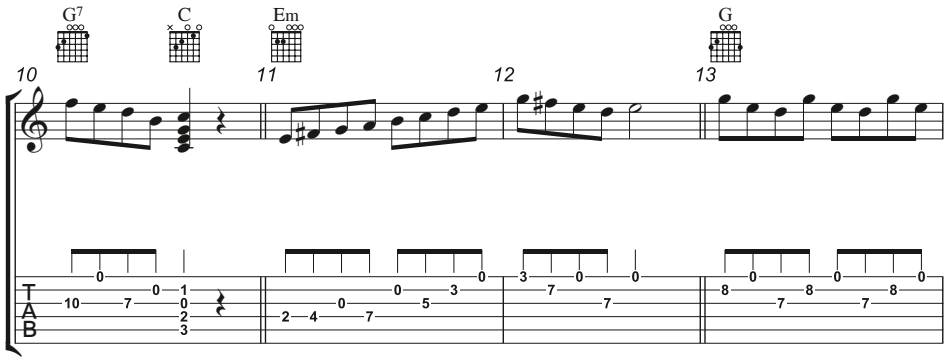
Bars one and two show the notes played with conventional fingering at the second position, whereas bars three and four show the re-fingered example with notes placed at higher frets and using open strings wherever possible.

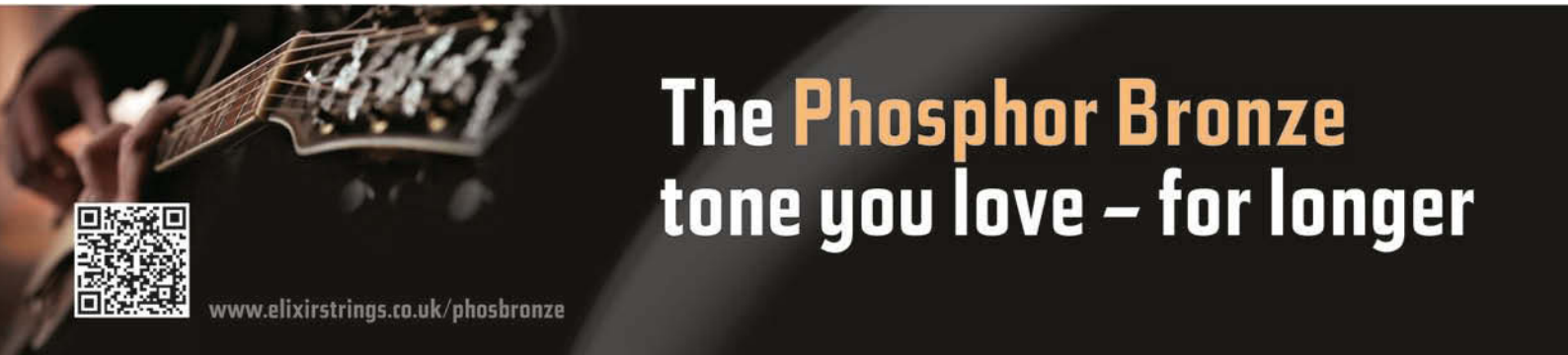
At bar three, the letter 's' over the slur means you can slide from the higher note to the next note, or execute a 'pull-off'. This reduces the amount of pick strokes and creates a wonderfully fluid sound.

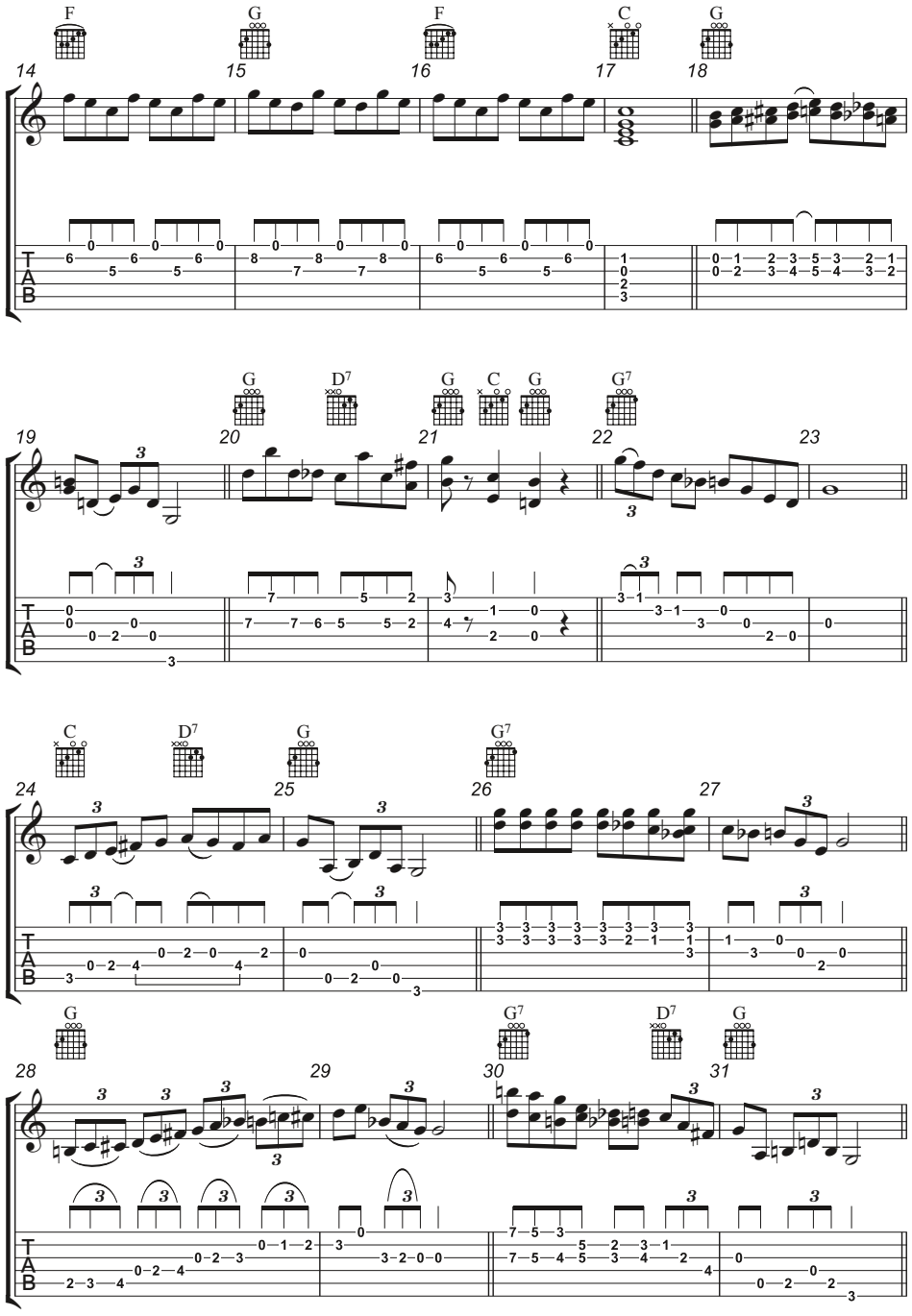
In the examples here, try and allow every note to ring as long as possible, in











other words, create a clean bridge with the left hand fingers so you don't deaden an adjacent string by accident and choke the sustaining note or open string. This requires quite a bit of discipline but will have a big pay-off in these lessons and improve your quality of playing in general.

Bars 18-21 are endings that utilise the techniques we learned using double stops and intervals, while bars 22-23 provide a cheeky bluesy end, particularly if you can get a real 'snap ' into the pull off on the first two notes.

In bar 24, slide from the E to F# and hold the fourth note of the bar, F#, to let it ring until you play it again as the eighth note. This is where you have to make a clean bridge so as not to foul the notes played on the G string while the F# is ringing. See if you can locate other note groups within this month's lesson where you can sustain a note for as long as possible.

Bar 26 starts with a bluesy double stop where one note is fixed (the high G) while the lower note creates a melody. Bars 32 to 41 contain two extended intros or endings. The first is simple but effective, clean and uncluttered, the second contains two cute hammer-on triplets to end the phrase. The bluegrass styled lick at bar 45 starts with a 'pickup' at the end of bar 44.

Finally, bars 47 to 50 are two cool sounding endings: the second uses fast triplet pull-offs for great effect.

I hope that you enjoy these. I know that, once mastered, you will find your playing has moved up a level. Good luck and message me at chris@gibbonsmusic.plus.com for help or one-to-one tuition. ■

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EXS 9-11 ONLINE

REHARMONISATION

Carl Orr of Rockschool provides an intuitive look at the concept of reharmonisation

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

I first became aware of reharmonisation when I listened to Carole King's 'You've Got A Friend' from her *Tapestry* album.

The first line of the song after the intro: "When you're down and troubled and you need some loving care" uses these chords Fmin, C7, Fmin and Fmin again. A few bars later, when more or less the same melody is repeated with the lyrics

"Close your eyes and think of me, and soon I will be there", it's over these chords: Gmin7, C7, Fmin and Fmin.

Only the first chord is changed, but it's quite a dramatic transformation as it puts the melody in a different harmonic context, from the rather settled Fmin chord, the tonic chord of the song, to the unsettled 2 minor (G minor) chord on the repeat.

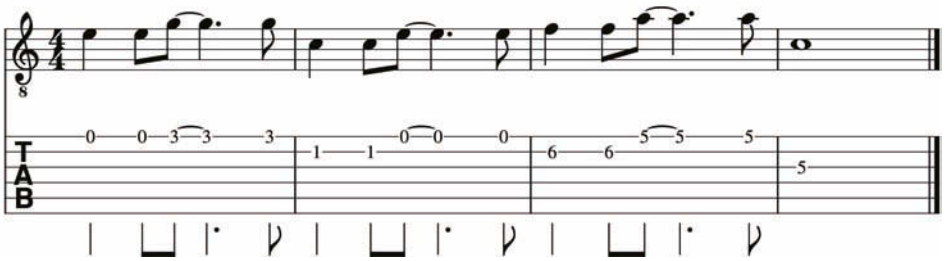
This is an excellent way to make the best out of a melodic phrase, as it's musically effective and, due to the reiteration of melodic material, gives the song cohesion.

Example 1 is a four-bar phrase I used in the opening bars of my tune 'Peace By Peaceful Means' from my 2006 album *Deep Down*. It's a simple 'sing-song' phrase in the key of C major. The simplest way to harmonise it is shown in **example 2**.

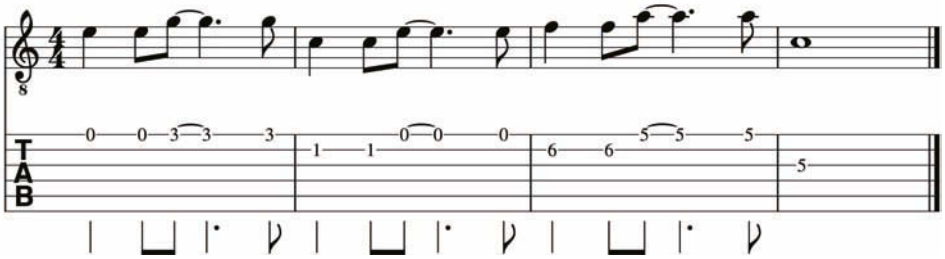
And it can be played as shown in **example 3**. There are many options for reharmonisation. The following examples will show a few methods of doing this...

The first and most obvious is to use the relative minor of each chord, so the C chord becomes an Amin chord and the F becomes a Dmin chord. In order to accommodate the melody I have made the chords into minor sevenths in **example 4**.

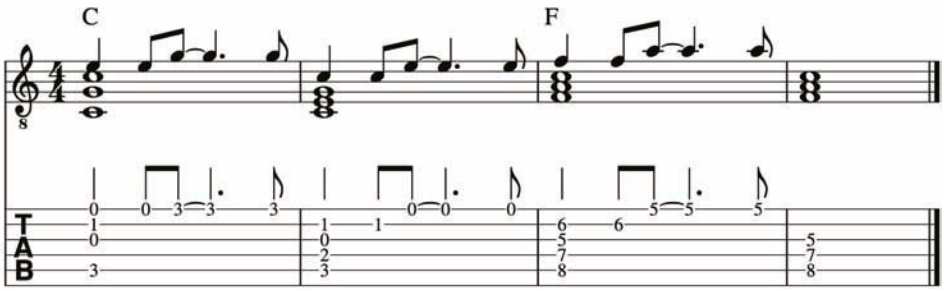
EXAMPLE 1



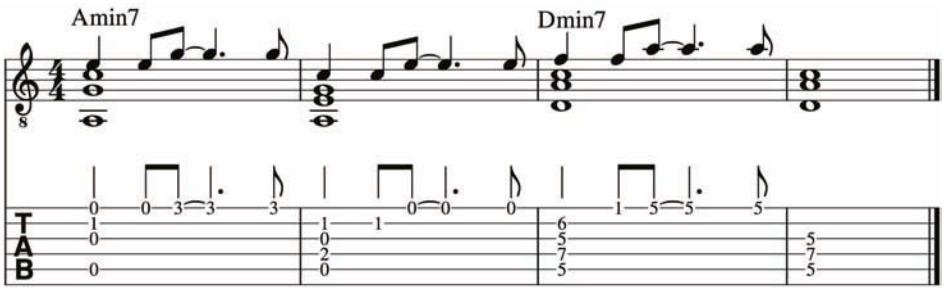
EXAMPLE 2

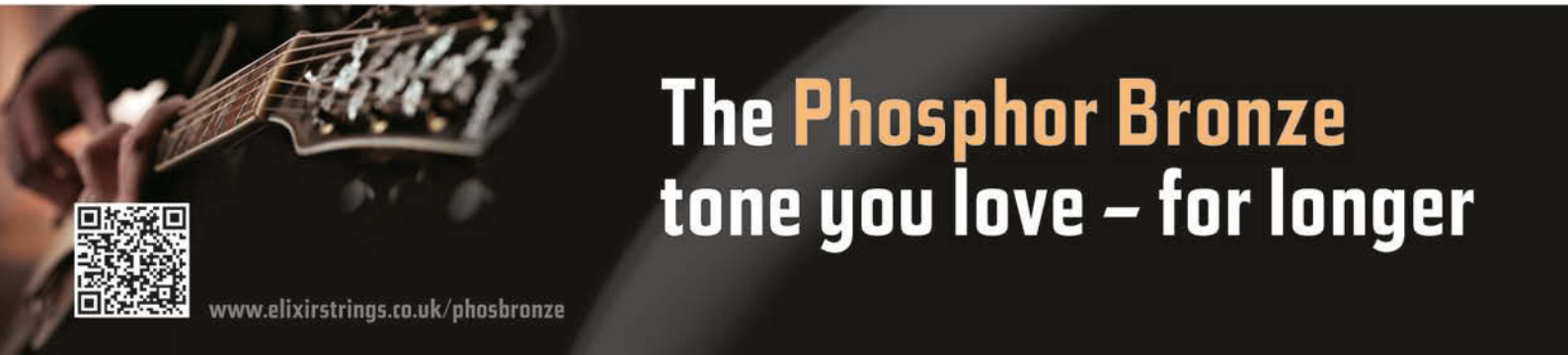


EXAMPLE 3



EXAMPLE 4





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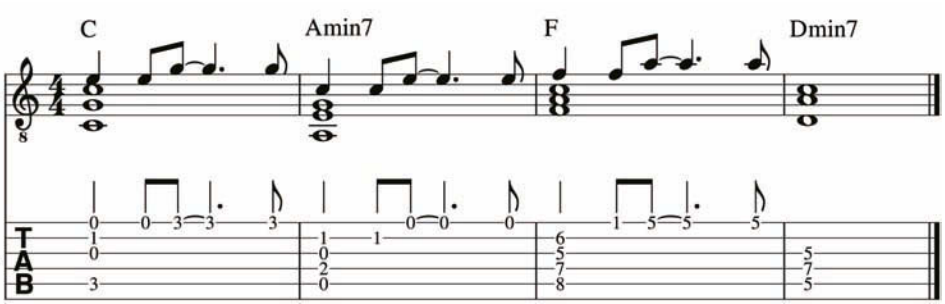
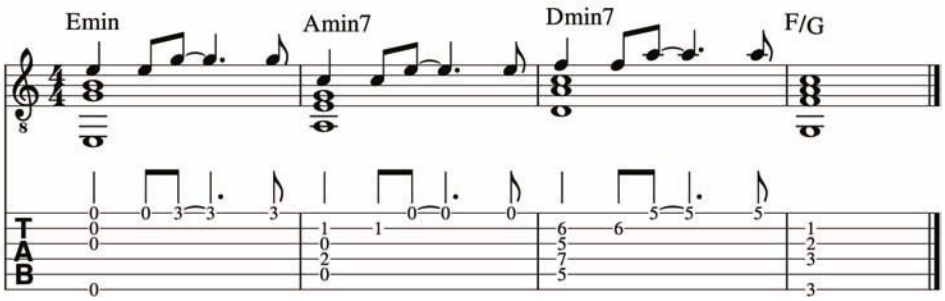


EXAMPLE 6



EXAMPLE 7

EXAMPLE 8

In **example 5**, using the four chords from the previous examples, I will accelerate the harmonic rhythm from one chord per two bars to one chord per bar, which gives a heightened feeling of momentum.

Example 6 is another simple, diatonic variation on the "one chord per bar" approach.

In **example 7**, I have moved the bass notes chromatically upwards from G and chosen chords that will accommodate the melody. The result is harmonically surprising without being dissonant.

In **example 8** I have done the reverse of the previous example, moving the bass notes chromatically down from G. Again the results are interesting without being jarring or unpleasant. This is certainly a worthwhile approach to explore if you want to add some harmonic colour to break out of your usual habit patterns. Don't let the complicated-looking chord symbols put you off, just dig the sounds, baby.

Pedal bass notes, as shown in **example 9** are a great way to create an interesting change of pace in a song, especially when combined with moving chords. The static, unmoving G bass note and the chords swirling above it create a unique sense of tension.

Next I have changed the key to F major in **example 10**. As it's a neighbouring key to the original key of C major, I have left the melody in its original key, while choosing all of the chords from the key of F major. This certainly "shines a different light" on the melody.

And to finish, **example 11**: a nice warm, friendly reharmonisation. I have accelerated the harmonic rhythm more, to two chords per bar and I have used a simple descending bass line of C Bb A G F E D leading logically to a nifty finish from G to C. I have kept the chords simple with a kind of old fashioned pop/ gospel piano flavour (think Billy Preston or Randy Newman).

I have avoided talking about the theoretical aspect of reharmonisation as I don't want to get caught up in confusing explanations of something I did intuitively, just using my ears (and years of experience) to choose chords that worked together in the context.

I hope you have enjoyed this brief exploration of reharmonisation and that you can find a way to make use of it in your own songwriting or your interpretations of other people's music. ■

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RICHARD GILEWITZ FINGERSTYLE GUITARIST

INTERNALISING NEW MUSIC

Richard's explores his method for learning new tunes

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

The more I work with my guitar students in the development of introducing a new piece into their repertoire, the more I seem to fine tune the little details that make such a difference in locking the music into their heads and hands with nearly foolproof success. I can say this because I actually have seen solid results with several students.

An important part of this method is that beginners, as well as those at a more advanced level, don't have a chance to be discouraged, as I often use pieces of music as models from which they develop or work on their techniques. A simple tune will suffice and many players tell me they feel like there is some light at the end of the tunnel as they play through it.

However, here's the hitch. I should clarify that there really is no finish. You might get to the point where you can record the tune, perform it or even teach it to someone, but over the years it will morph along with you as you mature as a player. There is always some subtle nuance that you want to change or the tune simply will do this on its own without any conscious intervention by you – the player.

I believe it has been said that a shark will die in the water without movement. I feel the same way about a tune. Without some kind of movement, the tune will appear stiff, and even with a flawless technique it will still feel like you're producing music from a human typewriter.

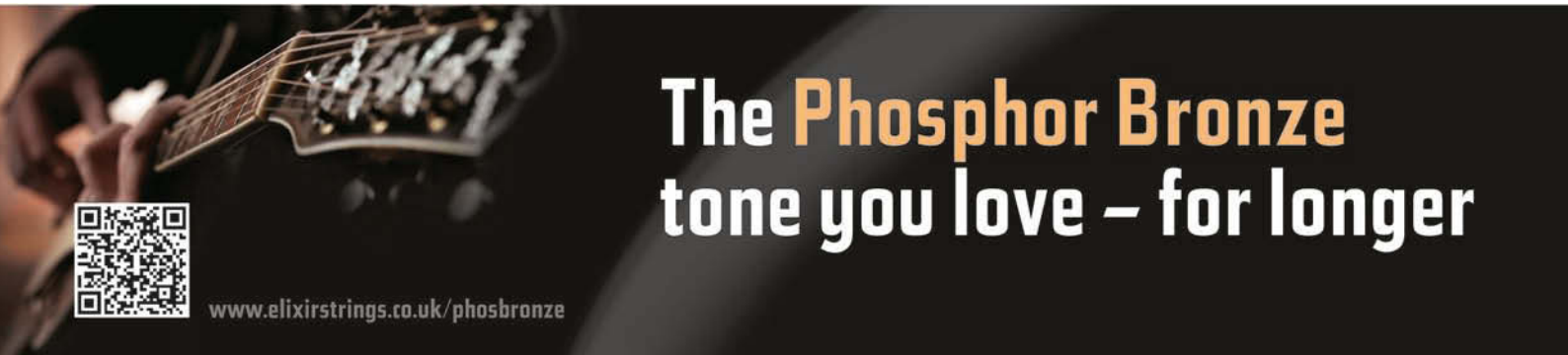
Below is a layered approach to learning a piece of music that I have developed over years of study and experience. It has served me well as I now have in the neighbourhood of four hours' or so worth of a musical repertoire rattling around in my head, all memorised and at performance level. Or, maybe that's just how my brain is wired. I

do see success in the students nonetheless and I would just hope that they were lucky enough not to have their brains wired like mine!

First write out the timing of the entire piece. In every bar for every beat, write the number corresponding to that beat, sometimes including the "and" between beats where, when and if a note is played. If the beat is not played, circle the beat number. For example, if you were simply dealing with four quarter notes, below each one you would simply write 1 2 3 and 4. Eight eighth notes would be 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &. If you had a quarter note, a half note and then a quarter note you would still write 1 2 3 and 4 below the designated timing slot locations but you would circle the 3 since there is nothing being played on that beat (remember, beat two was a half note).

Secondly, clap out the timing for each measure without initially using a metronome. At this point it is still possibly too much of a distraction. You really want to keep it as basic and simple during this layered approach. Just try short bursts of a bar or two of music and often try to having a landing point as you land on beat one of the following bar, and then give yourself a three-beat break with your clapping efforts included during this break (this is assuming you're dealing with a 4/4 timing piece). Do this for the entire piece, bar by bar or group of a few bars that are accumulated with confidence.

Next, repeat the clapping exercise for each bar with a metronome, starting slowly and gradually increasing the speed to a moderate practice speed. Don't even think about approaching the actual intended speed of the piece until you have solidified the timing ground base that you are developing. Inch the metronome up bit by bit but don't be in a hurry to rush. Maybe try and do it for a minute, do it with your eyes closed, watch your breathing, be conscious of your posture, clap



softer, then louder, then mix it up. A great trick to solidify things even deeper is to speak it instead of clapping it. Count out loud at first and then try to silently count in your head.

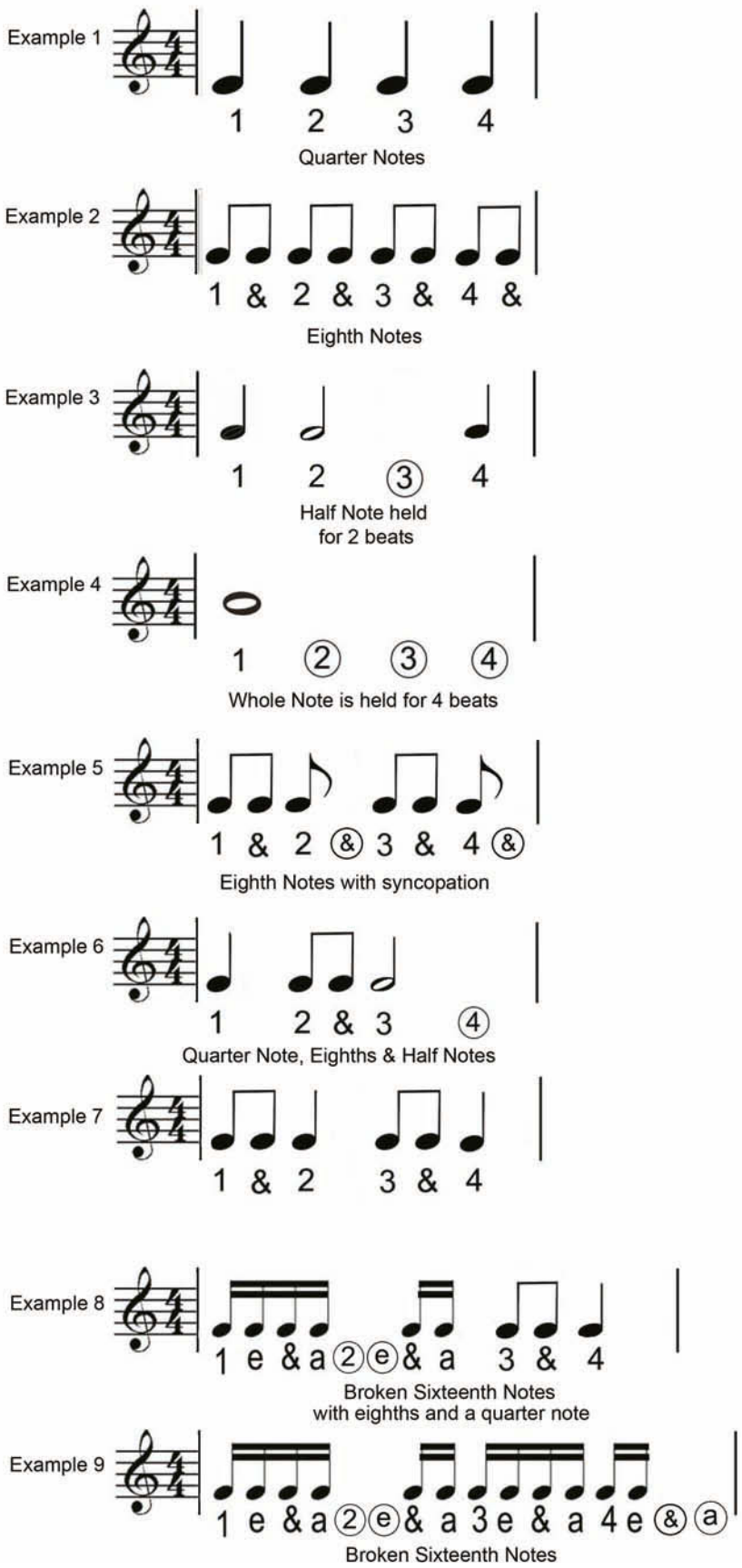
Step four – try to play the piece in short phrases of two to four bars using the same technique as before – without a metronome. Remember the clapping and perhaps go back and forth.

Now do the same thing, but with a metronome. Start with a slow speed and gradually increase it. Play it a lot before ramping up the metronome. In fact, why not go down in speed from your practised preset tempo?

Once you feel comfortable with what you are playing see if you can abandon sight reading the music. If you have been playing enough in your development to this point the chances are pretty good that you can rely on your brain and not the music as a crutch. However, be sure to constantly go back and refer to the music and assure yourself that what you have been playing without the music is in fact correct. Without checking and rechecking constantly you run the risk of playing an accurate impression of the tune. For me that is disrespectful to the composer.

However once you have the music locked inside of you and have recorded or performed the tune many times I would encourage you to do it your way. Of course it depends on the composer or the nature of the tune. I wouldn't, for example, suggest rewriting JS Bach because you think you found a better way to do it. But if you like your spin on 'Hotel California', go for it.

For some of the more complex rhythms regarding 16th notes I would strongly suggest spending some time with a professional music teacher who is able to walk you through the proper timing counts to help monitor your accuracy. An extra set of trained ears and eyes never hurt. The timing can become a bit tricky when more complex situations show up involving dotted notes, tied notes, and broken 16ths and mixed meters. Too many times the player will make the mistake of simply guessing. Also, you should become keenly aware that when you perform the tune in a public setting all the wonderful elements of ego, insecurity, panic, tiredness, emotional imbalances and caffeine intake are sure to blow everything you've developed out the window. You might consider recording your show to get an idea of what's happening 'up there' against what goes on during the daytime in your music room endeavors. ■


Example 1
1 2 3 4
Quarter Notes
Example 2
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &
Eighth Notes
Example 3
1 2 3 4
Half Note held
for 2 beats
Example 4
1 2 3 4
Whole Note is held for 4 beats
Example 5
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &
Eighth Notes with syncopation
Example 6
1 2 & 3 4
Quarter Note, Eighths & Half Notes
Example 7
1 & 2 3 & 4
Example 8
1 e & a 2 e & a 3 & 4
Broken Sixteenth Notes
with eighths and a quarter note
Example 9
1 e & a 2 e & a 3 e & a 4 e & a
Broken Sixteenth Notes

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SIMON MAYOR UK MANDOLIN MAESTRO

'BADINERIE'

APP EXTRA

JS Bach's 'Badinerie' arranged for the mandolin... we're sure he wouldn't mind

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

Earlier this year I featured the tune 'Golden Eagle', which had been taught to me back in 1994 by the accordeonist Luke Daniels. Luke had asked me to play on his debut album *Tarantella*, a collection of mostly traditional tunes, but with a couple of ventures into the classics including the tour-de-force title track of Paganini's 'Tarantella Sonata' and, less technically daunting, a version of JS Bach's 'Badinerie', the final short movement of his Orchestral Suite No 2.

Listening back to old projects can be an interesting experience – it's often a chance to evaluate how much you've progressed over the years and how your tastes might have changed. In this case, the choice of material was entirely Luke's, but fortunately for me I loved all of it, and 'Badinerie' is the second tune from that album to find its way into my own repertoire. I played a violoncello line on the mandocello on the original recording but subsequently learned the melody on mandolin.

The purists may throw up their hands in horror at the thought of Bach on a mandolin, let alone an accordeon, but the great man has been subjected to every conceivable treatment over the centuries and always seems to shine through. It's always seemed to me that, of all the great composers, his music transfers most easily from one instrument to another. There is no reason for mandolinists to feel left out, so pick up your mandolin and give this a try.

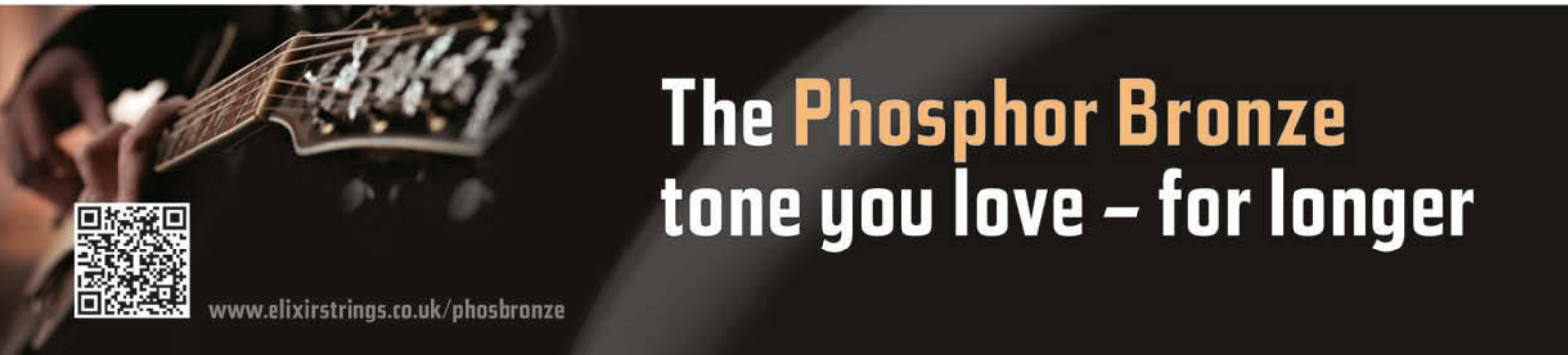
Bach scored the tune in B minor, but as a mandolin solo it falls under the fingers comfortably in A minor. Although the original score is orchestrated, as so often with Bach, the harmonies are so strongly implied in the melody that it stands alone quite easily.

If you read music, you don't even have to hear the tune; a quick glance through the score shows so many arpeggios (broken chords) that it's almost possible to hear the harmonic structure in your head before you've played a note.

There are occasions where I've suggested using the fourth finger where the rulebook says we should use the third. The G# in bar three is a good example; it's actually more efficient to do this because we can then use the third finger on the following D. Similar instances occur in bars 11 and 37.

In bar 18 we temporarily move into what is known as 'half position'; the first finger

'BADINERIE' – SIMON MAYOR



covers only the first fret and the fourth finger plays the sixth fret. It can feel quite bunched at first, but it's occasionally necessary to use this to play a passage more fluently.

Bar 25 contains a difficult moment where the second finger has to play a G on the top string immediately after a C on the second string. Any sense of fluency is lost if you lift your finger completely from the C before playing the G. So while I'd normally advise playing all notes with the tips of the left hand fingers, in this case it's far better to rock back to catch the G with the *side* of the finger rather than the tip, particularly since we need to play the C again after the G. Return your left hand to its normal angle of approach after this manoeuvre. It's a little unconventional, but works better.

This is an addictive tune, a piece of baroque pop music if ever there was, and despite a couple of tricky passages should be accessible to an intermediate level player. There are two MP3s to help you get to grips with this piece: a slower rehearsal version and a faster version more at performance tempo.

It's hard to believe today that although JS Bach was respected as a musician in his own lifetime it was only after his death that he came to be viewed as a truly great composer. ■

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MIKE DAWES FINGERSTYLE VIRTUOSO

CELTIC TRAVIS PICKING

Applying Travis picking to folk and Celtic styles

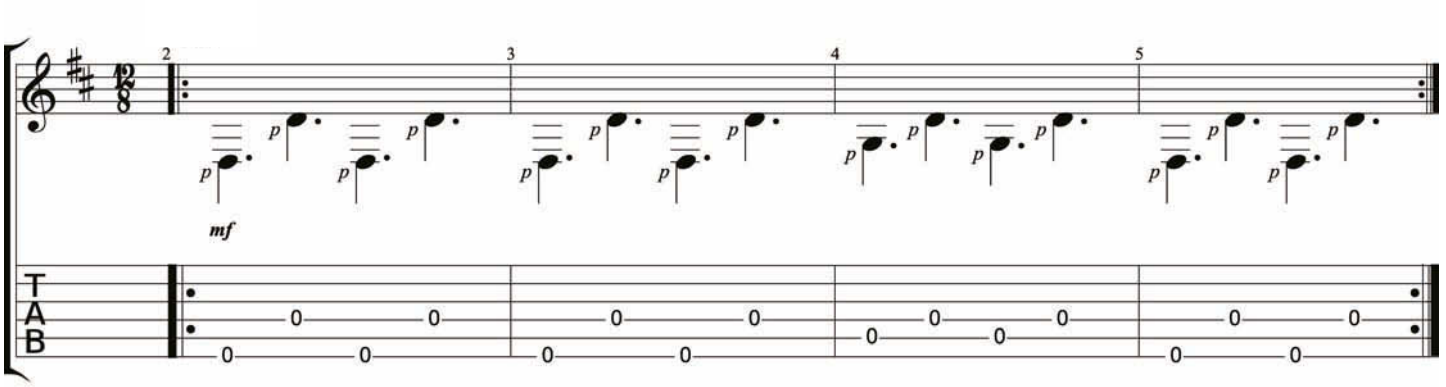
TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED

This month's column is brought to you from Arizona, and in the spirit of all things USA I'd like to revisit the Travis picking technique we looked at a few years ago. This time however, we will be focusing on applications within folk and Celtic styles as opposed to the more common country and blues that this picking approach has come to be associated with.

Country music maestro Merle Travis was born in Kentucky, USA way back in 1917. He is acknowledged as one of the most influential American guitarists of all time, in no small part due to his well-documented picking style known as Travis picking. This form of syncopated finger picking involves the thumb of the picking hand (*p*) picking octaves, fifths or other generally common bass intervals on beats one, two, three and four as an accompaniment to a melody.

As both parts weave around each other, the illusion of multiple instruments begins to take shape. This style of picking has become commonplace within the acoustic guitar community with everyone from Tommy Emmanuel to Justin Hayward using this method.

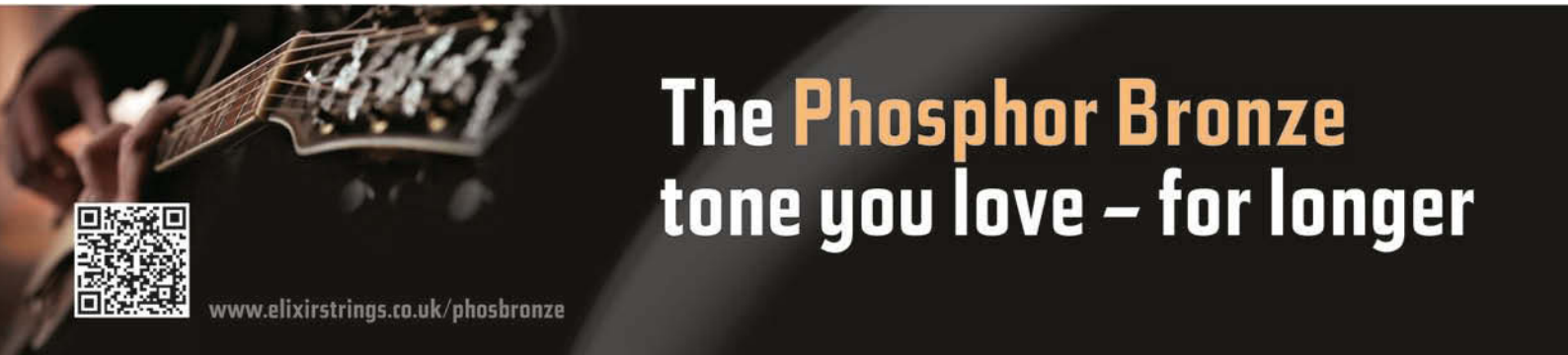
EXAMPLE 1



Although this technique was born out of standard guitar tuning, this month's column is in DGDGAD (low to high). The reason for this has to do in part with the accessibility of the notes we are playing today, within Celtic fingerstyle, specifically an extract from my tune 'Forest Party' featuring Troy Donockley of Nightwish/The Bad Shepherds.

By changing the tuning of the bottom three strings to DGD, we have unlocked the possibility of playing a Travis-picked octave (D to D) and a Travis-picked fifth (G to D) with open strings only. This is significant for two reasons, firstly the bass notes (D and G) are one fourth apart, and this is common with jigs and reels in a major key. Secondly, the open strings allow for maximum finger chaos in the fretting hand as there is little risk of tangled fingers.

Once you are comfortable with the initial bass notes and you have practised the rhythm over and over (and over) again, we can start to add our melody. For 'Forest Party' I chose to use notes from the D major scale with a flattened 7th note. The reason for this is that these particular intervals are evocative of traditional folk music; the lack of a major 7th note creates suspense and adds interest, this 'dominant scale' is more commonly known to many of you as the mixolydian scale. In this extract I switch between this mixolydian scale and the traditional ionian, or major scale.



EXAMPLE 2

“For any Travis picking beginners, the hardest part will definitely be keeping the bass rhythm stable as the melody dances freely above”

At first, this passage will seem daunting, but you will find a fair amount of repetition once the core concepts are digested. For any Travis picking beginners, the hardest part will definitely be keeping the bass rhythm stable as the melody dances freely above. It contains a lot of hammer-ons and pull-offs to replicate a fiddle.

Give it a go and hopefully you will be able to create your own pieces with a comfortable amount of Travis picking, regardless of the style of music you wish to tackle. ■

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RAYMOND BURLEY CLASSICAL GUITARIST

‘CANÇO DEL LLADRE’

Ray looks at a traditional Catalan folk song arranged by Miguel Llobet

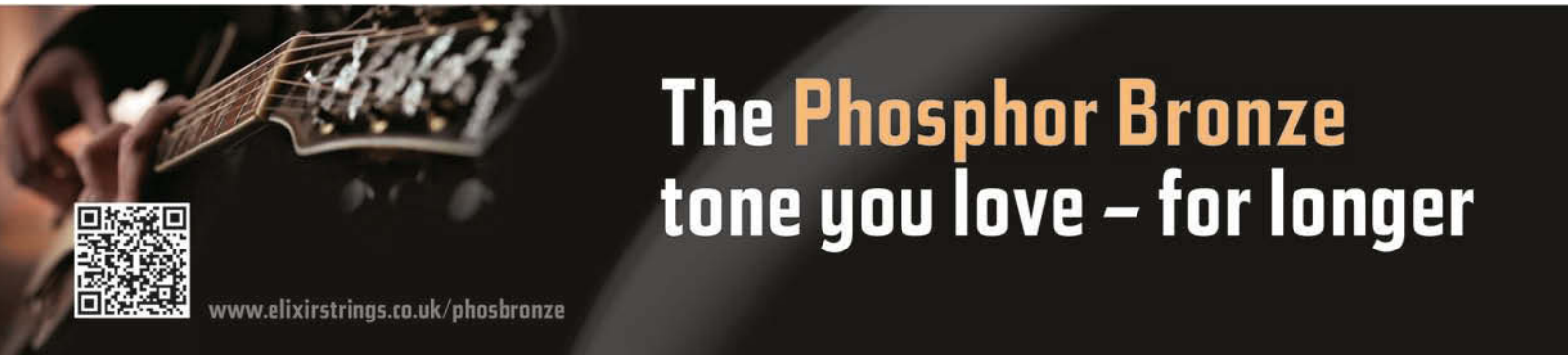
TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: ADVANCED

The piece I’ve chosen this time is a beautiful and effective arrangement by Miguel Llobet of a traditional Catalan folk song. Llobet was born in 1878 in Barcelona and died there in 1938. It was after hearing the blind virtuoso Antonio Jimenez Manjón in concert that Llobet decided to pursue the guitar as his life’s work. At the age of 16 Llobet attended the Municipal Conservatoire of Music where he studied with the great Spanish guitarist Francisco Tárrega. Llobet’s first public concert appearance was in 1901 in Valencia; three years later he made his debut in Paris. Concerts in England, Europe, the USA and South America followed.

‘Canço del Lladre’ (the robber’s song) is from a set of 16 folk song settings made by Llobet between 1899 and 1920 and is thought to have been composed in around 1900. While some of the pieces are slightly stronger and more imaginative than others, they all warrant attention.

The two-bar introduction consists of just a simple arpeggiated D major chord and, as you’ll see, the guitar’s sixth string must be lowered to D. This phrase can be effective if the second bar is played slightly quieter than the first, creating an ‘echo’. Try to project the melody above the (at times) quite busy accompaniment. The hand position changes in bar five and 18 may need some work to avoid them sounding *staccato* and clumsy – the piece must be played *legato* throughout. Llobet indicates that the notes comprising the triplets in bars six, 10, 14 and 23 should all be played by the right hand; personally I

‘CANÇO DEL LLADRE’



“‘Canço del Lladre’ (the robber’s song) is from a set of 16 folk song settings made by Llobet between 1899 and 1920 and is thought to have been composed in around 1900”

prefer to slur the first two notes of each group. You’ll notice later that there is a fair sprinkling of harmonics, in fact some bars consist almost entirely of harmonics. These are ‘natural’ and are executed by both hands simultaneously: a left hand finger touches the string at the fret indicated and the right hand plucks the string as normal. The exception occurs in the penultimate bar: while the left hand first finger holds the D on the fifth string and the 19th harmonic is achieved by the right hand alone. The *i* finger touches the 19th fret on the fourth string and the *a* finger plucks the string – some players (me included) prefer to use the thumb.

Balance can be a problem in bar 11: the open bass D and the harmonics on the second beat are purely accompaniment and all the other notes in the bar are melodic. The second beat harmonics are best executed with the left hand second and third fingers, thus avoiding clipping the value of the dotted crotchet melody note. Don’t assume the second half of the piece is a straight repeat of the first section; there are many quite subtle differences. The false relation in bar 22 (A and A# played simultaneously) may come as a shock initially, but it creates a lovely moment of tension. The term *ten.* appearing a number of times is an abbreviation for *tenuto* indicating that the note should ‘held’ slightly beyond its printed value. Technically, bar 29 may prove to be the most difficult for reasons of dynamic control, left hand stretch and shaping the final chord. Notice the sudden contrast of dynamic here.

As you’ll see, Llobet is quite liberal with his directions and it’s curious that no overall tempo marking was included. I suggest somewhere in the region of crotchet = 100, but with a certain amount of flexibility.

Many of Llobet’s Catalan folk song arrangements are miniature masterpieces and I’m confident that ‘Canço del Lladre’ will more than repay the work required. ■

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PAUL BRETT VINTAGE GUITAR EXPERT AND 12-STRING AFICIONADO

FULL TAB ONLINE

12-STRING CORNER

Paul revisits his notes from the 60s for 12-string inspiration and reveals full specs of his new 12-string Viator

TECHNIQUES SKILL LEVEL: SUITABLE FOR ALL

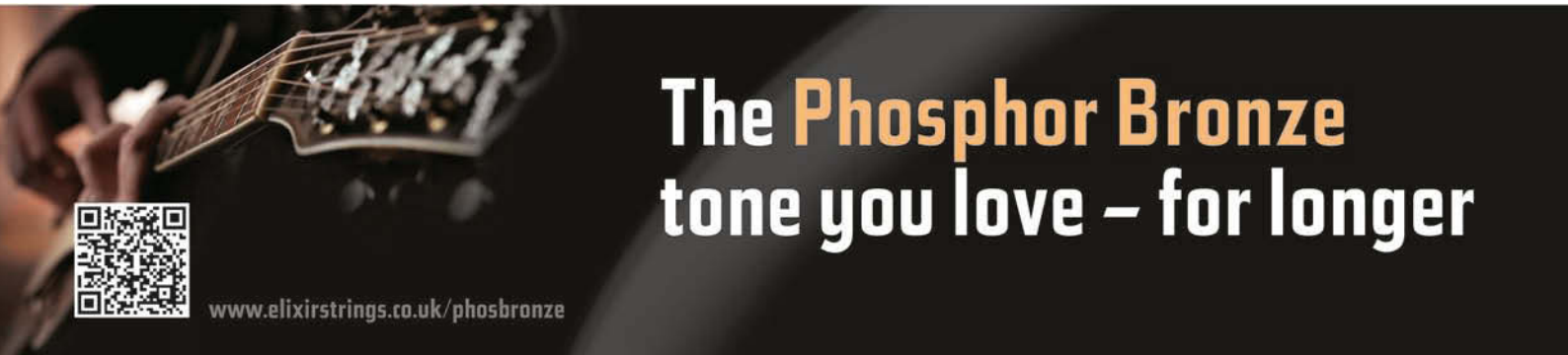
Looking back through some old notes I made in the 1960s and slightly digressing from the purely acoustic side for a few words, I was reminded about one of the unsung 12-string semis that seems to have slipped under the radar of late, but which was played by guitarists George Harrison and John Lennon.

I am referring to the Guild Starfire 12 string. It came with twin humbuckers and a set neck construction, which gave it more sustain. It had plenty of tonal jangle, a G-Harp tailpiece with a floating intonated bridge and a pickup switch with tone controls for the individual pickups. In fact, Harrison and Lennon played a customised version in 1966. The brilliant Jerry Garcia of the legendary Grateful Dead also used one for studio recordings.

Guild has never quite held the same market share across their ranges as Gibson and Fender and are way behind Martin for acoustics. However they have come up with some iconic models, such as Richie Haven's D-40 that served him so well throughout his years – especially when he opened Woodstock. But for me, Guild's true brilliance was in its 12-string guitars. The F212s made in Hoboken in the 60s were the best around and still rank in my top three 12-strings ever made for the mass market.

The F212 has two internal truss rods through the three-piece maple/mahogany/maple neck. The body is constructed of solid spruce and mahogany, adorned with a rosewood bridge and unbound, unlaid

'I JUST WANNA MAKE LOVE TO YOU'



fingerboard with a scale length of 25.5 inches. It's often referred to as 'The King of 12 Strings' and that's not far off the mark either. With medium to heavy silk and steel strings, you can go down two and a half tones below concert, which will give you some huge blues layers. Many notable players have used one of Guild's 12-string models down through the years including David Gilmour (F-512), Tom Petty (D 25), Pete Townshend (F-512) Paul Simon (F-212) and many others, including Ralph Towner, a 12-string jazz-orientated player whose music I like for its experimentation and composition, especially his 12-string solo tunes. Ralph also played with the legendary American jazz outfit Weather Report at one time too. Have a listen to Ralph playing his own composition 'live' (https://youtu.be/r_13j5GoNDU) to get an insight into his skills on 12-string.

Going through my old notes from the 60s, it refreshed my mind of things as they were back then. I have always had a strong passion for the blues and that's what I mainly listend to in those days. I noted that I had a jam session over in Twickenham with John Joyce, Brian Knight and Henry Jug. These kind of impromptu things happened all the time and it reminded me that Brian could have been a Rolling Stone. In fact, Brian was a founder member of the group along with Brian Jones. They disagreed over material however, with Brian K wanting to play Muddy Waters-style blues and Brian J favouring the more R&B of Bo Diddly and Chuck Berry. Hence they split paths, with Brian K forming a new outfit Blues by Six with Charlie Watts, and Brian Jones teamed up with Mick and Keith to form the Stones, which Charlie also later joined. The rest is history. My notes said we had a great jam that evening on Muddy's songs and one of these songs was 'I Just Wanna Make Love To You', which has been covered by many artists since. I think we recorded it on an old Grundig tape recorder, but where the tape is... well, who knows. However, it inspired me to offer you a new 12-string version of Muddy's song which you can add to your set, or just practise the style. Again, my great thanks to Mark Thompson for the tabs. ■

August sees the launch in the UK of my new Viator 12-string Travel Guitar by Vintage. It's basically designed on my successful Viator six-string Travel guitar and complements it beautifully. It is, like the sixstring, designed to accommodate different gauge strings for multiple tuning and pitch usage, depending on the player's requirements. I am currently posting a number of videos on YouTube to demonstrate the guitar's sound, playability and potential across a number of styles.

I've had lots of interest shown to date about this newbie, especially people asking for price and specs. So here's all the information:

Top: Solid Sitka spruce
Back and Sides: Sapele
Binding: Maple/rosewood
Rosette: Maple/rosewood
Brace: Custom X-scalloped
Neck: Nato, customised v-shape
Headstock: Rosewood
Fingerboard: Rosewood
Inlays: Pearloid
Bridge: Rosewood
Nut: Graphtech NuBone
Saddle: Graphtech TUSQ
Scale: 546mm/21.49"
Tuners: Grover open gear, chrome
EQ: Fishman Sonitone USB
Strings: High quality USA made.
Carry Case: Luxurious black, heavily padded Vintage 'Viator' carry bag with shoulder straps.
RRP: £329

I have to report I think it's my best and most original offering and I can't put the bloody thing down! As a 12-string, it plays like a six-string in terms of action, but it's twice and loud as a six-string in this genre and tonally it's amazing, especially when you consider Vintage's pricing for what you get. This little box of sound will open up some new areas of creativity for you as it has done recently for me lately. Here's a video link to one of my new videos featuring different style clips using the V12: https://youtu.be/V0OI72KTri0

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Paul sorts the bargains from the over-valued when looking at Gibson and Martin guitars and mandolins

COLLECTORS' CORNER

I've noticed recently some American musical instrument dealers stating on their adverts that certain items cannot be shipped to the EU. For example, a c.1900 Howe-Orme Mandolinetto, which Elderly Instruments is currently offering for sale, carries this restriction. This appears to be because they are selling this instrument on consignment for someone and not because the Cites Treaty restricts certain instruments from leaving the country due to their use of 'endangered' items.

Examples such as this remind us to check the fine print when buying collectable instruments from outside the EU if you plan to import them into the UK. Laws these days change so quickly that many things that were straightforward and relatively easy a few years ago can sometimes turn out to be a disaster for the buyer and leave that person facing heavy financial penalties.

I have a Howe-Orme Mandolinetto in my collection that I sourced years ago and I also have its original case. They were made in the late 1800s/early 1900s in the States to a high standard of finish. In fact, they were more like a skilfully crafted piece of antique furniture than your general run of instruments. The highlight of their craft featured a 'roll top' table, generally constructed of high quality Brazilian rosewood back and sides, a spruce top, a double-bound guitar-shaped body, a mahogany neck, an ebony fretboard and bridge, four-on-a-plate tuners and a 13-inch scale length. They are rare today in the collectors' market and are genuinely unique to mandolinetto design.

My one is clear and bright in sound and tonality and in perfect condition. The asking price in the States is generally around the $2000-$2500 mark, so they are not the cheapest of vintage mandolins, but they are certainly one of the most original. It's a funny old thing as far as prices and collectability is concerned with the mandolin family. Early bowl back models are not really that collectable, and their value is a giveaway in many instances. You

"LAWS CHANGE SO QUICKLY THAT MANY THINGS THAT WERE STRAIGHTFORWARD AND RELATIVELY EASY A FEW YEARS AGO CAN SOMETIMES TURN OUT TO BE A DISASTER"

only have to visit your local auction room or look on eBay to see the prices are not what they should be for such beautifully crafted instruments, especially when you consider the skill in crafting the actual bowl back itself.

However, venture into the Americana crafted side of things and you'll see a different story. Even there, if you consider that a Martin acoustic of the early eras can fetch thousands – or in some cases hundreds of thousands of dollars – mandolins are often only going in the hundreds. Gibson on the other hand has expensive mandolins from the early eras and not so expensive guitars.

For example: a Martin Style B 1920s mandolin commands around $900, whereas a Gibson A 4 (1920s) commands around $3000. When you ascend into the realms of a 1924 Gibson F5 mandolin, which can sell for around $165,000 and beyond, the gap is enormous between the two brands. When it comes to electrics there is no contest between the two mainstream brands; Gibson is the doyen in that field as Martin is in acoustics. Rarity also dictates prices, and I noticed also recently that the mid 1920s-30s Gibson acoustics have risen in value. Arguably that era was Gibson's finest, as many of their models have always carried a reputation and healthy price tags. From the L-1 (first year of the fixed bridge) through to the L-Century, and incorporating probably the most popular model for recording, the L-00, all of these models carry a safe collectors' tag.

I was looking around the UK dealers recently and found an L-Century for over £6000 as an asking price. It's probably a tad over the odds, but then rarity pops its head up – they are bloody hard to find, especially in Europe. Value is a funny thing. Six grand is below what you could pay for a brand new model, and, often, if you try selling your shiny new acoustic a short while later you'll have a hard job getting half that outlay back, whereas the Gibson will retain its value as it has proven that it's valuable and has demand among collectors.

The L-Century was made to commemorate the 1933 World Fair held in Chicago. It has a higher spec than other L models with a spruce top and figured maple back and sides, rosewood fingerboard and bridge and mother of pearl inlays up the neck. I brought my L-00 many years ago from John Joyce, who brought it from a sax player who ran a music shop in Hammersmith and went by the name of One Lung 'Arry. John repaired instruments for him and he brought the guitar for a fiver. He then sold it to me for a tenner, thus making 100 per cent profit in a couple of days.

I have used this guitar ever since on many recordings and live gigs. It really is a superb player and, of course, has risen substantially in value over the years. Sometimes it's difficult to tell what is an L-00 and an L-0 as they were made on the same benches, as indeed were the Kalamazoo series, which included the Robert Johnson KG-14. These were sold to non-Gibson dealers at cheaper prices than normal Gibsons at the time. Tonally, the only difference between the L-00 and the KG 14 is that the L-00 has more bass response. KG-14s too, have increased in value recently – partly due to the Johnson association and partly due to the fact they are really great guitars, especially for blues. ■

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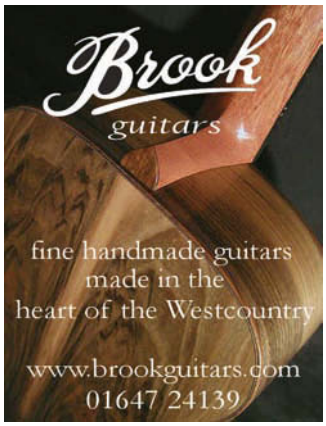

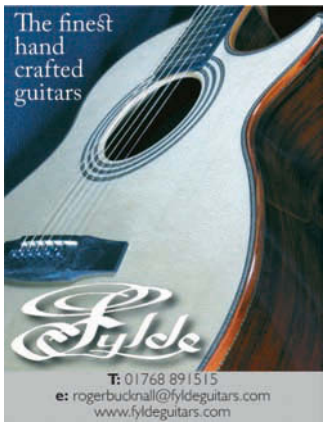

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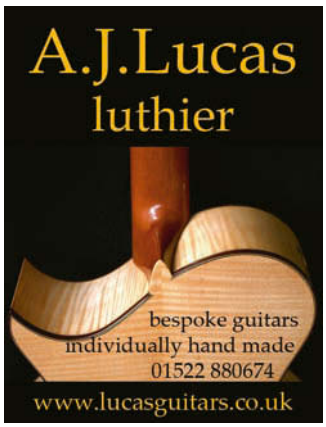

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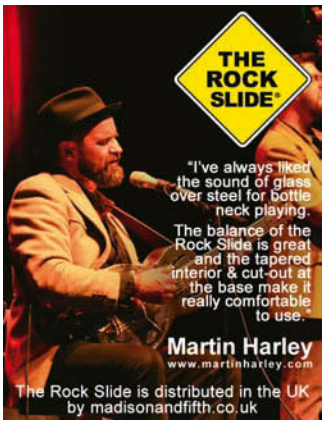

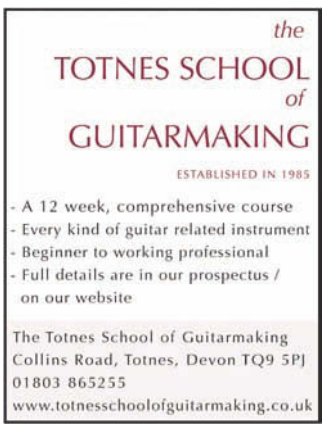

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LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM

WORDS: TERI SACCONE **IMAGE:** STEVE PROCTOR

Lindsey Buckingham is a bona fide rock icon, yet an overlooked guitarist due to the popularity of his singing and songwriting, which have overshadowed his vast playing talents.

Best known as a member of Fleetwood Mac, Buckingham's lush acoustic talents are apparent to any guitar fan. A purveyor of killer hooks, Buckingham often utilises acoustic guitar as much as electric and exploits acoustic more often within his solo work.

Lindsey Adams Buckingham was born in 1949 in a suburb of San Francisco, the youngest of three sons, all avid swimmers (one won an Olympic silver medal). It was when his eldest brother brought home an Elvis record that young Lindsey was seduced by rock'n'roll. He picked up a guitar, and began to teach himself a few chords, then progressed without benefit of tuition. He became interested in folk music in the early 60s via the Kingston Trio and learned the three-finger Travis style of picking (which he still employs to this day, minus a pick). Lindsey then immersed himself in banjo (which he would eventually use on various Fleetwood Mac tracks).

His passion for music eventually eclipsed swimming and in high school Buckingham joined a folk band – Fritz – which included a uniquely voiced singer, Stevie Nicks. The musical chemistry between Nicks and Buckingham was instantaneous and potent. Fritz soon developed an ardent local following and then began to open for a slew of top Bay-area bands of the late 60s (Janis Joplin and Jefferson Airplane among them.) When Lindsey left the region in the early 70s to relocate to Los Angeles, Stevie was by this time both his musical partner and lover. They embarked on a career as a duo, writing songs together, which was Buckingham's first foray into composing. They were signed to a record deal with a small label.

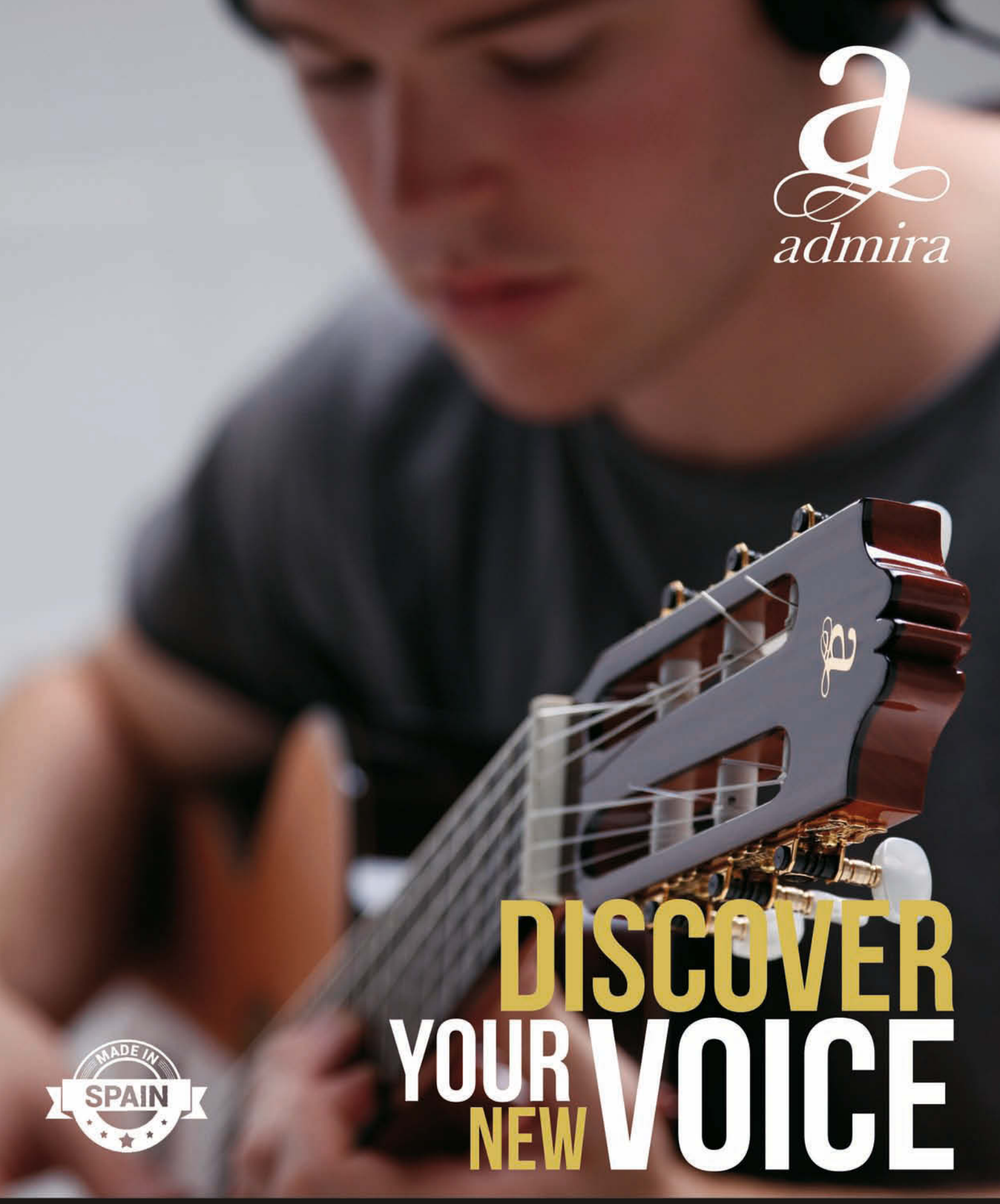
The resultant *Buckingham Nicks* album didn't have huge commercial impact. In fact, it was barely promoted or recognised at the time and the pair were dropped by the label rather abruptly. Drummer Mick Fleetwood fortuitously heard the album and spotted their vast talents. In 1975 they were in need of a guitarist, with the recent departure of Bob Welch. They approached Lindsey but he would only join if Nicks was part of the deal. Buckingham's presence helped to revolutionise the Fleetwood Mac sound, which had been largely bluesy. Lindsey brought with him a Beach Boys, sun-soaked, vibe but with a dark, dangerous edge. Besides his guitar talents, Lindsey's smouldering vocals, adept songwriting and later his masterful production abilities elevated the band considerably. Fleetwood Mac's popularity soared into the stratosphere on both *Fleetwood Mac* and *Rumours*. Put simply, with the genius of Buckingham (and Nicks) on board, they became superstars.

His Travis style of picking has served him well on classic tracks such as 'Big Love', 'Landslide', 'Second Hand News', 'World Turning' and 'Never Going Back Again'. He admits that he has only used a pick in the studio when he needed to "obtain a clean, clear cut sound."

Post *Rumours*, he was largely the sonic architect behind *Tusk* which didn't equal the impact or commercial viability of its predecessors. In fact, many fans rejected the direction he led Fleetwood Mac into on *Tusk*. But Buckingham made a valiant effort to take musical risks. So towering was his presence in Fleetwood Mac that, when Lindsey bowed out of a Fleetwood Mac tour in 1987, he was replaced by not one but two guitarists – Billy Burnette and Rick Vito.

In 2006, when asked by *Guitar World* how his innovative style came about, he replied: "There are the obvious things that you can go back to, like the Travis and banjo styles, and before that I picked up on the Scotty Moore stuff – which, in terms of its orchestration possibilities, is not dissimilar from a folk pick. But my hybrid style is probably a result of the fact that I started playing so young, and that I never took any lessons. All of the playing I did was based around learning songs. I wasn't interested in learning scales; I couldn't do a scale for you now. It was all about listening to songs, learning the chords and then coming up with interpretations out of that."

Although Fleetwood Mac have continued to tour, Lindsey's creative endeavours extend beyond that, as he's amassed a vast solo repertoire of uncommercial, experimental guitar work across seven solo albums. 2008's *Under the Skin* is a prime example of his vibrant eclecticism. ■



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